

colour, darker towards the tip (the reverse of what is seen in old birds), was in both very soft and weak, that of the male bird being the darker of the two; the chin and lores of both completely bare, the former of a yellow, and the latter of a greyish colour. The tongue was remarkably small, being not more than an eighth part of the length of bill. There was no appearance of any crest on either bird, nor could any trace of buff-colour be observed. I was scarcely able to decide the true colour of the eye, as the birds, when I saw them, had been dead more than forty-eight hours; but from appearances I should say the irides were *hazel*, and the pupils *black*. The upper surface of the plumage was dirty white, darker on the back and scapularies; the under surface purer white. The first four quills were white, with dark-brown tips; and all had black shafts, presenting a very curious and pretty appearance when expanded."

"As you are writing about the Spoonbill," says Mr. Selater, "you will be interested to hear that, when I last went to Holland, I paid a visit to one of the few breeding-places of the bird which are still left in that country. At the date of my visit, May the 29th, 1867, the Spoonbills had not commenced building; but I traversed the ground where their nests are generally placed, and made myself acquainted with the locality, so that I hope to be more successful in inspecting the actual process of nidification at a future time. I left Amsterdam, in company with a Dutch acquaintance, early in the morning, and went by train to Nieuwerkerk, a small station on the Utrecht line; thence we proceeded to the Nieuwerkerker Platt, a large piece of water in the neighbourhood, and took a boat, which conveyed us to some marshy islands situated in the further part of the lake. These islands are covered with dense beds of reeds, the favourite haunts of the Thrush-like Warbler (*Calamodyta turdoides*), which, at this period of the year, were singing vigorously all the day long. These reeds are varied by clumps of stunted willows, which were tenanted by a breeding-colony of the common grey Heron. The whole surface of the islands was about a foot deep in water at the time of our visit; a little later in the year we were told the water would be lower, and the Spoonbills would make their nests in the reeds. On approaching the willows, we found them occupied by a large flock of these snow-white birds, which rose speedily in the air, and flew round over the lake. There were between sixty and seventy of them, a curious spectacle within hearing of a railway train and within sight of the chimneys of Amsterdam. But as operations have already been commenced with the view of draining the Nieuwerkerker Platt, it will not be long before one of the few remaining places of refuge of the Spoonbill in Holland will have ceased to exist."

Besides being dispersed over the marshy districts of Europe, Dr. Jerdon informs us that the Spoonbill is very generally, but not abundantly, diffused all over the Indian peninsula, "frequenting rivers, lakes, and tanks. It is generally met with in small parties, but occasionally in rather large flocks, feeds in shallow water, moving its bill about from side to side, and picking up various aquatic insects and larvæ, small crustacea and mollusks."

Mr. Hewitson informs us that the Spoonbill "builds its nest upon the tops of the highest trees, and upon the ground. When built on trees, it is composed of sticks, lined with finer materials; when upon the ground, surrounded as it always is by swamp and water, it is formed of large masses of reeds, rushes, and tufts of grass, to raise it above the influence of the wet. The bird breeds in the month of May, and lays three or four eggs," which are chalky white, sparingly blotched with rufous and dark brown, the red spots being sometimes, though rarely, absent; they are 2 inches 5 lines long, by 1 inch 8 lines broad.

"The Spoonbill," says Yarrell, "possesses a peculiarity of internal structure much too interesting to be passed over. This bird is one of the few which has been found to possess no true muscles of the organ of voice; and no modulation of a single tone appears to be possessed by it." On comparing the figure-of-8-like convolutions of its singular windpipe with the organs of voice in other birds, "it will be seen that no particular ossification at the junction of the bronchi with the bottom of the tube of the trachea exists, nor any muscles by which variations in the length of the trachea or the bronchi can be effected." After quoting some instances in which this structure was not found in young birds, Mr. Yarrell adds:—"As this formation is known to exist in old females as well as in old males, I am induced to suppose that, like the occipital crest, neither sex obtain it till they have acquired a certain degree of maturity."

General plumage white, with a wash of brimstone-yellow on the crest, feathers, and across the breast; bill black, except at the tip, where it is orange-yellow; skin under the tongue and naked skin of the throat deep yellow; irides red; legs, toes, and interdigital membrane black.

The female is similar in colour, but somewhat smaller in size, and has the crest less developed.

In the very young state the birds are clothed with a greyish-white down; the bill, orbits, throat, legs, and feet are yellow, and the irides ash-colour. After the first moult the shafts and ends of the primaries are black; there is no indication of a crest; and the bill is of a much lighter colour than in the adult.

The Plate represents an adult male and three nestlings in the foreground (the former about half, and the latter the size of life) with a reduced figure of a female in the distance.