

HERODIAS ALBA.

Great White Egret or White Heron.

Ardea alba, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 59.

—— *egretta*, Temm. Man. d'Orn. (1815), p. 367.

—— *egrettoïdes*, S. G. Gmel. Reise, tom. ii. p. 193, tab. 24.

—— *modesta*, J. E. Gray, Zool. Misc., p. 19.

—— *flavirostris*, Wagl. (Jerdon).

Erodias Victoræ, Macgill. Man. Nat. Hist., Orn. vol. ii. p. 131.

—— *albus*, Macgill. ib. vol. ii. p. 134.

Herodias candida, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 584.

—— *egretta*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 559.

—— *symmatophorus*, Gould, Birds of Australia, vol. vi. pl. 56.

Egretta alba, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 354.

THERE can be no doubt that the *Herodias alba* has just claims to a place in the avifauna of the British Islands. Willughby and Latham both regarded it in this light; and more recent writers, from Yarrell to Mr. Stevenson, have recorded instances of its occurrence in various parts of our country. Sir William Jardine states that during the winter of 1840-41 several White Herons were killed both in England and Scotland, and mentions that one was seen several times upon the shores of the Solway on the English side, above Port Carlisle; and Mr. Harting, in his 'Handbook of British Birds,' enumerates nearly twenty instances of its capture in other localities.

As regards the habits and economy of the bird, there has of course been but little opportunity for becoming acquainted with them in this country, the individuals that stray here from the neighbouring continent being usually permitted but a brief sojourn, its attractive appearance soon causing it to become a victim to the gunner, and to be added to the rarities of some local museum or private collection.

Ornithologists are still divided in opinion as to the range of the *Herodias alba*, whether it be universally dispersed, or if it be confined to the older portion of the globe. Some would restrict its limits to Europe, Asia, and Africa, and separate the Australian and New-Zealand birds as distinct—a view which I formerly entertained when I gave a figure of the species in the sixth volume of my folio work on the birds of Australia, though I rescinded it in my Hand-book. As regards the individuals which have visited Britain, there is no doubt that they were examples of one and the same species, a species which frequents the whole of the southern portions of Europe, Africa, from north to south, Asia Minor, India, and China. All Indian sportsmen and collectors speak of it as a bird of great beauty and of striking appearance, particularly just prior to the breeding-season, when its plumes are in their highest state of development.

The following brief notes have been kindly forwarded to me by my correspondents, to which I have appended some passages which have from time to time been published respecting the Great Egret.

Mr. Rodd, of Penzance, informed me on the 21st of November, 1870, that on one of the Scilly Islands, called Hedge-rock, there were frequently Common Herons, and that among them was seen a large white bird of a similar size, that it had been seen there more than once, and, after straying away for some time, returned again to the same islet with the Common Herons; as this individual was, so far as Mr. Rodd knew, never shot, it must not be included among the birds of Scilly; for it may have been a Spoonbill, or a White Stork.

Charles Isham Strong, Esq., of Thorpe Hall, Peterborough, wrote on the 14th of November, 1872, to inform me that the Great White Heron in his collection was killed on Thorney Fen in Cambridgeshire (some ten miles distant), by a small farmer, who wished to have it preserved for himself, but, not liking the expense, sold it to a birdstuffer at Peterborough, who resold it to Mr. Strong's father. This specimen, which has the ornamental plumes on the back, would appear to have been killed between the 1st of May and the 14th of July.

In Yarrell's 'History of British Birds' (vol. ii. p. 456) it is stated that Messrs. Sheppard and Whitear, in their "Catalogue of the Norfolk and Suffolk Birds," published in the fifteenth volume of the 'Transactions of the Linnean Society,' say:—"On the 3rd of October, 1834, in a walk on the banks of the river Stour, we observed a large White Heron cross over from the Suffolk to the Essex side of the river. It appeared to be pure white, and to stand up rather taller than some Common Herons which were feeding not far off. A similar bird was observed in the spring on the Oakley shores; and subsequently to our observation, one was seen on the banks of the river Orwell." But the most valuable addition to our knowledge of the