

and the stomach contained a mere pellet of mouse-hair, which, from the dimensions of the tail remaining in the pellet, was believed to be that of a short-tailed field-mouse."

During the progress of the present work its pages have been frequently enriched by notices of the occurrence of some of our rarer birds, kindly transmitted by various friends; and the three following relative to the present subject are now before me. Mr. E. H. Rodd, writing from Penzance, April 24th, 1867, says, "I examined a female Purple Heron yesterday which had been brought from the Lizard. It was in the rufous or immature state of plumage—that is, if such be the plumage of the female before the development of the plumes characteristic of the adult male. The proof of its being a female was conclusive, the opening of the ovary displaying a series of eggs from the size of swan- to that of dust-shot."

Mr. R. C. Musgrave, in a note dated Eden Hall, Penrith, November 21, 1870, says, "the Purple Heron in my father's collection was shot near Alston, in Cumberland, about twenty years ago;" and, lastly, Mr. J. H. Gurney, jun., writes from North Repps, near Norwich, on the 5th of March, 1872, "a very fine young Purple Heron was shot at Horning (which is between Norwich and the sea-coast), about the 4th of December last, and was taken to a Norwich bird-stuffer, of whom I bought it. Two mice were found in its stomach. My father has an adult Sussex specimen."

The Purple Heron is, perhaps, nowhere more abundant than in Holland and in the adjoining province of Brabant. There it is common, and breeds in many of the great swamps near the embouchure of the Rhine and other rivers of those low countries; it is also found to the northward of those countries, but in less and less abundance as we proceed in that direction; to the southward, on the contrary, its numbers do not diminish; and it is found throughout the central and southern parts of Europe, wherever localities suitable for its maintenance occur. It is tolerably abundant, and even breeds in Spain, as will be seen on reference to Mr. Howard Saunders's paper in 'The Ibis' for 1871, p. 390, where he states, "This species is abundant, breeding a few miles from Seville. It was the only Heron we saw at the Albufera, of Valencia, where we found upwards of a dozen nests in a reed-bed on the 29th of May—some with young birds, and others with eggs in various stages of incubation. The nests were most flimsy structures, being little more than reeds bent down and arranged crosswise, with a few separate pieces added. The complement of eggs in no case exceeded three. The following is a description of the nestling, made on the spot:—Skin and feet yellowish green, yellow on the abdomen; upper mandible greenish horn-colour, lower mandible yellow; iris pale straw-yellow; feathers reddish brown; hairy crest; shafts of feathers lead-blue; all edged with white down; claws horn-white. Cry for food, 'kick, kick, kick,' harsher when irritated."

The occurrence of the Purple Heron may probably also be looked for throughout the whole of Africa from north to south, but of course only in such situations as are favourable to its habits—that is, among the rank vegetation of the Upper Nile and the banks of the other rivers of that as yet but partially explored country. In India it is common, as the following note by Jerdon, in his 'Birds of India,' will testify. "The Purple Heron," says this author, "is very abundant in the well-watered districts of India, frequenting marshes, reedy ground, rice-fields, and the like, but is rarely or never seen on the bare and open spots frequented by the Common Heron. It may often be observed with its head and long neck just protruding above the grass, looking remarkably like the head of a snake, which has suggested its Telugu name of Snake Heron. It rises with a loud harsh cry, which it repeats as it flies along, especially if it has been alarmed. Unlike most of the other Herons, this species breeds among the large reeds. I have seen several of its breeding-places; but its nests were quite inaccessible. It feeds on fish, frogs, &c. It is found throughout India and Ceylon, extending into Burmah and Malayana."

Mr. Swinhoe informs us that the Purple Heron is found in Central China, and states, on the authority of Temminck, that it frequents the even more eastern country of Japan.

There exists so little difference in the outward appearance of the sexes, that dissection must be resorted to to distinguish the one from the other.

The Plate represents a fully adult bird in the breeding-plumage, about two-thirds of the natural size.