

it is very common, and a constant resident, but is nowhere more abundant than so near London as Kensington Gardens and Richmond Park.

Many substances are used for the lining of the cavity in which its spotted eggs are deposited—leaves of the oak and beech, strips of bark, &c.; and so partial is it to the bark of the cedar for this purpose, that Mr. Alfred Newton informs me the bird will travel a long way to obtain it. On this part of the bird's economy, the following interesting note has been communicated to me by Mr. J. Illsey:—

“Being in want of the eggs of the Nuthatch, I proceeded to examine a hole in an oak tree, much frequented during the breeding-season by a pair of these birds; and after half an hour's hard chiselling, came to the nest. It was entirely formed of thin layers or laminae of the inner bark of the pine and similar trees; of this material there were several good handfuls deposited at the bottom of the hole, and in the centre of the heap were five eggs of a dull cream-colour, spotted and blotched with red. Whether the bird is in the constant habit of employing this material, or not, I cannot say; but I am inclined to believe that it is. Considering its size, this is certainly one of the most active and vigorous of our birds, and one of the most inoffensive; it subsists principally upon insect food, but during the winter also feeds upon the kernels and seeds of the yew, hazel, &c., for the former of which it appears to have a preference, as perforated yew-stones may always be found in abundance in the cracks and fissures of the trees around its haunts. Many a time have I watched it hammering away at a kernel within a few feet of my head, without its evincing the least distrust, or seeming to be for a moment disturbed by my presence. In some districts it is not numerous; but it is generally to be met with in the neighbourhood of yew-plantations of any extent.”

The Nuthatch may be readily kept in captivity, when, from its liveliness, cunning, and drollery, it becomes a most amusing pet; but it must be kept in a cage composed entirely of wire, as any part formed of wood would be speedily destroyed. It may be fed on hemp-seed, oats, barley, and nuts, all of which it readily splits with its bill. Bechstein mentions the following instance of its familiarity:—“A lady amused herself in winter with throwing seeds on the terrace below her window, to feed the birds in the neighbourhood. She put some hemp-seed and cracked nuts even on the window-sill and on a board, particularly for her favourites the Blue Tits. Two Nuthatches came one day to have their share in this repast, and were so well pleased that they became quite familiar, and did not even go away in the following spring to get their natural food and to build their nest in the wood. They settled themselves in the hollow of an old tree near the house. As soon as the two young ones, which they reared here, were able to fly, they brought them to the hospitable window, where they were to be nourished, and soon after disappeared entirely. It was amusing to see these two visitors hang or climb on the walls or blinds, while their benefactress put their food on the board. These pretty creatures, as well as the Tits, knew her so well that, when she drove away the Sparrows which came to steal what was not intended for them, they did not fly away also, but seemed to know that what was done was only to protect and defend them. They remained near the house for the whole summer, rarely wandering, till one fatal day at the beginning of the sporting-season, when, on hearing the report of a gun, they disappeared, and were never seen again.”

The sexes are alike in colouring, and differ but little in size; and the young assume the livery of the adult from the time they are able to fly. The eggs, which are from five to seven in number, are subject to considerable variety in form and colouring; but are usually of a stone-white, spotted and blotched with red and grey, rather larger, but otherwise very similar to those of the Great Tit (*Parus major*).

The following is a description of a very fine specimen sent to me by Mr. Cuthbert Larking, on the 24th of September 1856:—

“All the upper surface clear grey; a black mark, commencing at the nostrils, passes through the eye, skirts the upper part of the ear-coverts, and curls down the side of the neck; between the clear grey of the crown and the black streak is a faint line of greyish white, which extends all round the front of the forehead; throat, cheeks, and lower part of the ear-coverts white, the latter slightly tinged with buff; under surface of the body clear buff; flanks rich chestnut; under tail-coverts white, each feather broadly edged with rich chestnut; two middle tail-feathers clear grey, the remainder black, the three next on each side tipped with grey, and the outer one with a square spot of white near the tip of the inner web, and below it a longer mark of the same hue; a conspicuous spot of black on the axillæ; upper mandible olive-black; under mandible clear whitish grey, blending into olive-black towards the tip; irides nearly black, surrounded by a narrow, bare, dull blue-grey lash; tarsi dull yellowish brown; the joints and pads inclining to sulphur-yellow.”

The figures are of the natural size.