

by one of my dogs pointing it; and the following year two nests, with five eggs, were found. They were upon the ground, among the heath, the bottom of the nest scraped until the fresh earth appeared, on which the eggs were placed, without any lining or accessory covering. When approaching the nest or young, the old birds fly and hover round, uttering a shrill cry, and snapping with their bills; they will then alight at a short distance, survey the aggressor, and again resume their flight and cries. The young are barely able to fly by the 12th of August, and appear to leave the nest some time before they are able to rise from the ground. I have taken them, on that great day to sportsmen, squatted on the heath, like young black game, at no great distance from each other, and always attended by the parent birds: last year (1831) I found them in their old haunts, to which they appear to return very regularly." That the bird breeds still further south in the British Islands is proved by the following remarks of Mr. Stevenson, of Norwich:—"While planting and cultivation have induced the Long-eared Owl to become a regular denizen of this country, drainage and the enclosure of commons and waste lands have banished the Short-eared Owl from its former breeding-grounds. In the south-western parts of Norfolk, where fens are now almost entirely done away with, this species bred regularly; and its nests were also taken occasionally in the vicinity of the coast. It still visits us regularly, and very numerously, in autumn." Mr. F. Bond has taken several nests in Wicken and the adjoining fens near Burwell, in Cambridgeshire; but these fens are now drained.

Mr. Wheelwright, who writes so interestingly in the 'Field' under the name of "An Old Bushman," says:—"The Short-eared Owl is a summer migrant in Lapland, arriving towards the end of May, and during the whole season it is very common on the fells. It frequents exactly the same tracts as the Merlin, and, although perhaps more nocturnal than diurnal in its habits, is very often seen hawking over the fells in broad daylight. Its flight much resembles that of the Goatsucker. It is a very bold bird; and I once saw a Short-eared Owl actually beat off a Golden Eagle from the vicinity of its nest. I have often been amused, while lying by my camp-fire on the fells at midnight, by watching the curious evolutions of this bird in the air, which greatly reminded me of those of the Common Lapwing. Its loud cry, "Wau-wau," much resembles the barking of a dog. We took one fresh nest, May 29."

Mr. Wolley, in a paper read at the Meeting of Scandinavian Naturalists, at Christiania, in 1856, mentions that "This bird has a singular habit, when in fear for its nest, of suddenly casting itself down on the ground, in a place where it is hidden from the sight of the passer-by, and there wailing like a woman in fright or danger." This fact, he adds, has no doubt given rise to a story which he had heard among some of the Lapps, relating to a supernatural bird, which they say sometimes makes a visit to their encampments, darting down upon a spot whence a tent has lately been removed, seizing a fragment of skin or fur from the dress of one of the family, and flying away with it. "Presently it returns and again darts down, but this time on the spot where the owner of the fragment will be buried. There it cries and moans like one in the agonies of death, and just as that person whose fate is thus indicated will, at his or her end, wail and moan."

Mr. Alfred Newton informs me that, during the first week in August 1854, his brother Edward and himself, when riding over a heath at Elveden, disturbed a Short-eared Owl, which made a great outcry, rising high into the air, and then dashing down with a piercing scream. "We proceeded to search, and soon came upon a half-fledged young one, sheltered in the heather, by the side of which a freshly-killed rat had been deposited. A day or two after, we found that, notwithstanding the anxiety shown by the parent bird, this young one had been abandoned by it since our visit, and was dead. We, however, discovered another of the brood close by; but this too was in like manner deserted, though we had been careful not so much as to touch it. Not wishing to cause the deaths of the remainder of the family, for there were doubtless some more hidden in the heather, we made no further search; and though the jealous temper of the old bird hardly deserved to be rewarded, I trust the rest of the brood attained to maturity. The Owlets we found had probably strayed to a considerable distance from the nest; for we looked over the ground so carefully that, had it been near at hand, it could not have escaped us."

Mr. Jerdon considers it probable that this is the Owl that is not unfrequently hawked at by falconers in the North-western provinces of India; and in confirmation of this view, Mr. Wolf informs me that he once released a Short-eared Owl from a springe, which, on flying away, was pounced upon by a Goshawk that had been secretly sitting on a neighbouring tree, and carried it off in its talons.

The buffy tint of the breast varies from yellowish red to light buff and yellowish white. In some specimens the longitudinal stripes on the centre of the breast and flank-feathers are very narrow, in others broad. When fully adult, the colours of the two sexes assimilate very closely; and the young, from their first assumption of feathers after the downy state, partake of the colouring of the adult.

The Plate represents the bird, with its nest and eggs, of the natural size.