Genus THALASSIDROMA.

Gen. Char. *Bill* shorter than the head; much compressed in front of the nasal sheath, with the tip of the upper mandible suddenly curving and hooking downwards, and that of the lower one slightly angulated and following the curve of the upper. *Nostrils* contained in one tube or sheath, but showing two distinct orifices in front. *Wings* long and acuminate, with the first quill shorter than the third, the second being the longest. *Tail* square or slightly forked. *Legs* having the tarsi rather long and slender, reticulated. *Feet* of three toes, united by a membrane; hind toe represented by a small, straight, dependent nail.

FORK-TAILED STORM PETREL.

Thalassidroma Leachii.

Le Petrel de Leach.

The first discovery of this Petrel in Europe is due to the researches of Mr. Bullock, who, in the year 1818, while on a tour through the northern and western isles of Scotland, found it breeding on the island of St. Kilda, whence he brought the original specimen from which M. Temminck took his description. In his '*Manuel d'Ornithologie*,' under the article alluded to, he dedicates the bird to Dr. Leach by the title of *Procellaria Leachii*. Since the period of its first discovery, when it appeared to be a bird of extreme rarity, it has been found, and that not unfrequently, on most parts of the British coast, and in the channel intervening between our island and the Continent.

In its habits, manners, food, and nidification it so strictly resembles the Common Storm Petrel that the same description will serve for both. It differs from that bird, as also from all other European Storm Petrels, in being one of the largest in size, in having a forked tail, and remarkably short tarsi.

The colour of the plumage is a sooty black, with the under tail-coverts and a patch on the rump white.

COMMON STORM PETREL.

Thalassidroma pelagica, *Selby*.

Le Petrel tempête.

This, the least of web-footed birds, though by no means the least important, has been long celebrated by the name of "Mother Carey's Chicken," bestowed upon it by the British sailors, as the foreboder of storm and tempest to the mariner.

The habits and manners of this singular group of birds may be described as being both nocturnal and oceanic. During the bright glare of day they conceal themselves in the crevices of rocks, stones, &c., from whence they depart on the approach of evening, and skim over the surface of the sea in search of food: approaching storms and dull murky weather also rouse them from their retreats to visit their congenial element; hence it is that when seen at a distance from the shore they intimate the approach of gales and severe weather. When out at sea they appear partial to the company of ships, which they follow for days together, and, surprising to say, are never seen to settle on the water; in fact, the only period of rest they appear to allow their organs of flight is while, with extended wing, they skim, half flying half tripping, over the surface of the billows; and it would appear as if the bones of the legs were expressly formed for this manœuvre, being sufficiently flexible to bend without breaking to any opposing pressure or sudden concussion. While skimming around ships they pick up any refuse oily matters that may be thrown overboard, and also any of the small mollusca that may be brought to the surface by the agitation of the water which the vessel occasions in her progress.

The Common Storm Petrel is abundant over the whole of the northern seas of Europe, especially in the rocky islands of Scotland, where it breeds in the crevices of rocks, among loose stones, and occasionally in holes on the ground, generally laying a single egg of a pure white. The young remain in their retreats until their pinions are sufficiently strong for flight, and it is a considerable period before they are able to follow their parents.

The adults of both sexes are alike in plumage, which is invariably of a sooty black, with a white spot on the rump; the bill and tarsi black.

We have figured an adult of each species, of the natural size.