Genus LESTRIS.

Gen. Char. *Beak* moderate, hard, strong, cylindrical, very compressed, hooked at the point, the *upper mandible* covered with a cere, the *under mandible* with an angle on the inferior edge. *Nostrils* approaching the point of the beak, diagonal, narrow, closed on their posterior part, and pervious. *Tarsi* long, naked above the knee. *Feet* having three toes before, entirely palmated; hind *toe* very small; *nails* large and hooked. *Tail* slightly rounded, two middle feathers elongated. *Wings*, first *quill-feather* longest.

SKUA.

Lestris catarractes, *Temm.*

Le Stercoraire cataracte.

The Skua is an inhabitant of the higher regions of both hemispheres: it is constantly found on the Northern seas of the European Continent; and although it is not met with, we believe, in the North American seas, Captain Cook observed it at the extremity of the Southern Continent, being very abundant about the Falkland Islands; and several collected by Captain P. P. King, on his last survey of the Straits of Magellan, and Terra del Fuego, were found on examination to be strictly identical with our own. In Europe; the Orkney, Shetland and Feroe Isles appear to be among the favourite breeding-places, and during the period of incubation the male becomes extremely fierce and pugnacious; it is, notwithstanding, a welcome guest to the inhabitants, whose flocks, but for this bird, would be more frequently exposed to the ravages of the eagle and raven; the former he will courageously attack, and repel, whenever he appears within the range of his dominions, for which service we can personally testify to the unwillingness with which the natives allow this bird to be destroyed.

The *Lestris catarractes* may be often observed wandering about, generally in pairs, on the northern shores of these Islands; the season, however, when the Skua may be most abundantly met with, is that in which the innumerable shoals of herrings visit our shores, at which times they are followed by flocks of Gulls of various species, who find in them an ample repast. It is not, however, for the sake of fishing, himself, that the Skua follows in the train, but, like the rest of his congeners, for the purpose of depriving the more industrious labourers of their booty, harassing them with unceasing ferocity until they deliver up their spoil. Fish thus obtained is not, however, his only food; for carrion, and the flesh of dead cetaceous and molluscous animals are not refused; it is even asserted, that, like the rapacious tribe of Falcons, whose place he may be said to take on the ocean, he will destroy birds of inferior size and strength,—an act for which his formidable talons, strong hooked beak, and great powers of flight, render him extremely well qualified.

The sexes differ but little in colour and size, and, contrary to what takes place in the other species of this genus, the young and adult exhibit but trifling variations. Its entire length is about twenty-two inches.

The bill is long, black, and strongly hooked; legs and feet jet black; length of the tarsi two inches and a half; feet webbed; toes armed with strong hooked talons, that on the inner toe being the most formidable Its general colour is a dark umber brown, varied on the back with light shades of reddish brown; the neck marked with elongated lines of dusky yellow; the first quill-feather of the wings the longest, the upper part of the webs and shafts white; the lower part dark brown; tail cuneiform, the two centre feathers projecting about an inch beyond the others. The egg of this bird resembles that of the Herring Gull in shape and colour, but is rather smaller, measuring two inches and a half in length by one and three quarters in breadth, olive brown blotched and spotted with darker brown.

We have figured an adult male, two thirds its natural size.

In our description of the Pomarine Gull we omitted to notice the egg of that bird, which, as figured by Naumann and Buhle, measures two inches three lines in length, and one inch eight lines in breadth; of a dark olive green, blotched and spotted with two shades of red brown.