KITTIWAKE GULL.

Larus Rissa, *Linn.*

La Mouette tridactyle.

It would appear that we must consider this species of Gull as only one of the list of our summer birds of passage, as it journeys south in the winter, and returns again in the spring to its usual haunts. Whether this is the case with the birds of this species in the continental parts of Europe we are not able to say; but as it is spread far northward along the whole of the European shores, we may conjecture that at least in the higher latitudes it is a bird of migratory habits. We do not consider that the abbreviated hind toe, which is a distinguishing characteristic of this Gull, is of sufficient consequence to entitle it to rank as a distinct genus; and though Mr. Stephens has thought differently, we are not inclined to adopt the term *Rissa* as a generic title, but retain the word as its specific appellation.

The difference which the plumage of the Kittiwake exhibits at different ages has led to a multiplication of its synonyms and some degree of confusion, the young having been considered by many ornithologists as a separate species, and described under the title of *Larus tridactylus*, and in popular language the Tarrock; this error, like others of the same kind, which in the works of the earlier writers were almost unavoidable, is now cleared up, the various gradations of plumage from youth to maturity being well ascertained.

In its habits and manners the Kittiwake generally resembles the rest of its congeners; it is, however, less addicted to seeking its food on the land, but is observed ever busily engaged over the surface of the water, in pursuit of small fishes, mollusca, crustacea, and other aquatic productions, which constitute its means of subsistence.

The places chosen for its sites of incubation are the ledges of bold precipitous rocks overhanging the sea: numbers breed annually on the Farn islands, at Flamborough Head, on the Bass Rock; many also breed annually about Freshwater, Portland Island, and elsewhere. The nest is made of dried grass and sea-weed, and the eggs are two in number, of an olive white, blotched with dark brown and purplish grey.

The common name of Kittiwake is given to this bird from the peculiar call during the season of incubation, which the male reiterates as he wheels round his mate upon the nest, or pursues his way on buoyant wing over the surface of the waves.

In its adult stage, which is not attained till the second autumn, the plumage of the Kittiwake is very simple, the mantle and wing-coverts being fine pearl grey; the quills are tipped and bordered along their outer margin with black; the head, neck, tail, and under surface white; bill yellow; tarsi and toes dark olive green.

The young of the year have the bill black; head, neck, chest, and under parts white, with the exception of a black spot near the eye and nearly encircling it; a marked crescent of black crosses the upper part of the back, and advances upon the neck; the rest of the back and scapulars are grey; the lesser wing-coverts black; the greater coverts and secondaries grey, passing into dull white, with terminal patches of black; tail white, largely tipped with black.

After the first general moult the black markings become more obscure and limited, and the bill acquires a tinge of olive; at the next autumn moult, that is, in twelve months after the first, the full plumage is acquired.

Our Plate represents an adult bird and a young bird of the year, of the natural size.