VELVET SCOTER.

Oidemia fusca, *Flem.*

La grande ou double Macreuse.

This is the largest species of the genus *Oidemia*, and may be readily distinguished from both its congeners (*Oid. perspicillata* and *Oid. nigra*,) by the snow-white bar across the wing and the patch of white situated beneath the eye. It also differs very considerably in the conformation of its bill, in which, however, it approximates most nearly to *Oid. perspicillata;* for although it is much more dilated, still it presents traces of the swollen tubercle, but to a less extent than in either of the other species.

The northern regions of the globe constitute the true habitat of all the members of the group; the present species retires within the Arctic Circle during the summer, and regularly migrates to the southern seas on the approach of severe weather. It is found in considerable abundance on various parts of our northern coasts, where it feeds upon muscles, mollusca, &c., which it always obtains by diving. It is very abundant in the Arctic regions of Asia, and is reported to breed upon the banks of the larger rivers in Denmark, Russia, Kamtschatka and Siberia: it is also found in America. It generally goes far inland for the purpose of nidification, and constructs its nest of grass, lined with down, in which it deposits from eight to ten white eggs.

As in the other members of the genus the sexes differ very considerably from each other, but as the female very closely resembles the female of the Surf Scoter we have not deemed it necessary to give a figure of it.

The male has the whole of the plumage of a deep velvety black, with the exception of a patch of white beneath the eye, and the secondaries, which are pure white and form a band across the wing; upper mandible black at the base, the remainder red, edged with black; under mandible pale yellowish white, edged with black; legs red on the outside, and deep yellow sprinkled with black on the inner; irides white.

The female has the whole of the plumage of a dull blackish brown, which is much lighter and rayed with greyish on the under surface; between the bill and the eye, and on the ear-coverts, a spot of white; beak blackish ash colour; tarsi and feet dull red; irides brown.

We have figured a male of the natural size.