RED-HEADED POCHARD.

Fuligula ferina, *Steph.*

Le Canard Milouin.

This fine species may be said to represent in Europe the Canvas-backed Duck of America, so famed for its rich and juicy flesh; and although the flesh of the Pochard is superior to that of all the other European diving ducks, still it must, we are told, yield the palm in this respect to its Western ally.

The Red-headed Pochard is an article of considerable traffic in the London markets, where it is known by the name of the Dunbird. So vast is the quantity taken during the year, that, were our information not received from an undoubted source, we should have hesitated in stating the amount; but we are positively assured that no less than fourteen thousand four hundred have been captured in one decoy, the sale of which produced twelve hundred pounds.

Although this species is frequently taken in the usual decoys, still, we are informed by Montagu, the method commonly practised was something similar to that of taking woodcocks. Poles were erected at the avenues to the decoy, and after a great number of these birds had collected on the pool, a net was erected by pulleys to the poles, beneath which a deep pit had previously been dug; and as these birds, like the woodcocks, go to feed just as it is dark, and are said always to rise against the wind, a whole flock has been taken together in this manner; for when once they strike against the net, they never attempt to return, but flutter down till they are received into the pit, from whence they cannot rise.

The Red-headed Pochard is very widely dispersed, being common over the whole of Europe, Asia, and a portion of Africa. It is said to breed in the marshes, and to lay about twelve white eggs. Its food consists of aquatic vegetables, mollusca and other animals, obtained by diving to the bottom, which it does with a facility only equalled by its vigorous flight. Being entirely aquatic in its habits, it not unfrequently takes up its abode on the open sea, where it obtains a plentiful supply of bivalves and other shells, of which it appears fond, but which kind of food generally gives a fishy and unpleasant flavour to its flesh.

The male has the head and neck chestnut brown; the breast and rump black; the back, scapulars, wing-coverts, thighs, and flanks greyish white, beautifully pencilled with zigzag lines of black; the quills and tail grey; the bill blackish grey with the tip and base black; and the tarsi and toes bluish grey.

The female has the head and neck of a dark reddish brown; the under surface dusky white; and the back like that of the male, except that the whole of the black markings are darker and more obscure.

The Plate represents a male and female rather less than the natural size.