

GARGANY TEAL.

Anas Querquedula, Linn.

Querquedula circia, Steph.

Le Canard sarcelle d'été.

THE feathers pendent from the back of this little Duck, together with its chaste and sober plumage, render it one of the most interesting and graceful species of its family. In point of affinity it has many characters in common with the genuine Teal, with which genus it has been by previous authors associated. It must be allowed, however, that it possesses some features in the style and markings of its plumage which are not in strict unison with the birds of that genus: this circumstance, and a slight deviation in the form of the bill, will in all probability hereafter lead to a further subdivision of the genus; in which case the Gargany, the Blue-winged Teal of America, and others, will form a minor group by themselves.

The range of the Gargany over the Old World is very considerable, being dispersed over the whole of Asia and Northern Africa, appearing to give preference to mountain districts, where it enjoys a temperature very similar to that of Europe, in every part of which it is abundantly distributed. It migrates annually to the British Islands during the months of April and May, and takes up its abode on our meres and large sheets of water, whence numbers are sent during the season to the London market, where they are esteemed as a great acquisition to the table, at a period when the Common Teal and most other edible species have retired to distant regions to breed. It is even questionable whether the Gargany that visits us at this period is not on its migratory route to more remote northern countries, such as Lapland, Russia, &c., where it may perform the task of incubation unmolested and in safety: we are strengthened in this opinion by the circumstance of their never being seen here during the autumn and winter; and even those individuals which visit us in the spring are extremely local in their habitat. Mr. Selby informs us that no instance is known of its occurring in the northern counties at any time.

Its food is strictly similar to that of the Teal and other ducks which are destitute of the power of diving, and consists of the tops and shoots of various aquatic plants, to which are added shelled snails, water insects, and their larvæ.

The nest is placed among herbage near the water; and the eggs, which are white, are from eight to ten in number.

The sexes, when adult, present a contrasted difference in their plumage. The young males during the first year, and the adult males during winter, are so like the female as to require an experienced eye to detect the difference.

The adult male in spring has the top of the head and back of the neck dark brown, a broad stripe of white extending over each eye; the cheeks and sides of the neck chestnut brown finely dotted with white; the lower part of the neck and chest light buff, each feather being marked with horseshoe-shaped lines of brown; the feathers of the back olive brown with lighter edges; the scapularies long, flowing, and of a green colour with a conspicuous stripe of white down the centre of each feather; the secondaries and shoulders light grey; the speculum green; the rump and tail brown, the former being spotted with darker brown; the belly white; the flanks transversely rayed with black and grey; and the feet and legs ash grey; bill blackish; irides brown.

The female has the top of the head, the back part of the neck, and the upper surface brown, the feathers having lighter edges; the throat white; the chest brown; the feathers edged with yellowish white; breast and under surface white tinged with buff; bill and feet blackish brown.

The Plate represents an adult male and female of the natural size.