

Genus QUERQUEDULA, Ray.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* as long as the head, elevated at the base, straight, semicylindrical, nearly of equal breadth throughout; tip obtuse, with the dertrum, or nail, small and hooked; mandibles laminated, and having the laminæ almost entirely concealed by the deflected margins of the upper mandible; *nasal fosse* small, lateral, near to the culmen of the bill. *Nostrils* oval, pervious. *Wings* acute, with the first and second quills of nearly equal length. *Tail* wedge-shaped, with the two middle feathers more or less elongated, and acute. *Legs* having the tarsus rather shorter than the middle toe. *Feet* with four toes, three before and one behind; the front ones webbed; the hind toe small and free.

COMMON TEAL.

Anas Crecca, Linn.

Querquedula Crecca, Steph.

La Petite Sarcelle.

THIS elegant little Duck, one of the smallest of the *Anatidæ*, is widely distributed over the Old World. It is abundant on the range of the Himalaya, whence we have received many examples, the collections brought home by Colonel Sykes and Major Franklin, the former from the western ghauts of India, and the latter from the plains intermediate between Calcutta and the Nepaul hills, affording us examples which, on comparison, are found to be strictly identical with our European birds, as are also specimens from Africa. M. Temminck names Northern America as among its native localities; but from this opinion we are inclined to dissent, for the American examples may always be distinguished by a white crescent-shaped band on each side of the chest near the shoulders. This, together with the absence of the white tertial feather, will, we think, constitute fair grounds for a genuine specific distinction.

In the British Islands, though it breeds in the northern districts, its numbers are greatly augmented in winter by visitors from the high latitudes of the Continent, which spread themselves over the marshy parts of the country and freshwater lakes. At this season, numbers are taken in decoys and by other methods for the table, their flesh being highly prized.

Mr. Selby, who has had many opportunities of investigating the habits of the Teal in a state of nature, observes, that our indigenous broods "seldom quit the immediate neighbourhood of the places in which they were bred, as I have repeatedly observed them to haunt the same district from the time of their hatching till they separated, and paired on the approach of the following spring. The Teal breeds in the long rushy herbage, about the edges of lakes, or in the boggy parts of the upland moors. Its nest is formed of a large mass of decayed vegetable matter, with a lining of down and feathers, upon which the eggs rest;" they are eight or ten in number, and of a yellowish white. The young are at first covered with a dark-coloured down, which gradually gives way to a plumage differing little from that which is permanent in the adult female.

The plumage of the adult male, which is very beautiful, is as follows:

The top of the head, cheeks, and neck, of a deep chestnut; the throat black; from behind the eyes to the back of the neck passes a broad band of fine glossy green, margined by a pale yellowish border, into which the chestnut of the head and cheeks somewhat abruptly merges; the back, scapularies, and flanks rayed alternately with irregular zigzag bars of black and white; breast and under surface yellowish white, the former ornamented with round spots of black; wing-coverts brown; speculum glossy green, deepening at the sides into velvet black; quills brownish black; under tail-coverts buff, with a longitudinal band of black; bill black; irides brown; legs blackish brown. During the months of July and August, the male loses his finely contrasted plumage, and assumes that of the female, from which at this time he is not easily distinguished.

The female differs considerably, having the top of the head Sienna yellow, with dashes of deep brown; throat and cheeks dusky white spotted with brown; upper parts dull brown, each feather having a lighter border; under parts yellowish white; speculum green.

We have figured a male and female in the adult colouring, rather less than the natural size.