Genus TADORNA.

Gen. Char. *Bill* shorter than the head, higher than broad at the base, depressed or concave in the middle, the tip flattened and turning upwards, nearly of the same breadth throughout; *dertrum*, or *nail*, abruptly hooked; upper mandible laterally grooved near the tip; under mandible much narrower than the upper one, and, when closed, hidden by the deflected *tomia* of the upper; both mandibles having prominent transverse lamellæ. *Nasal fosse* near the base of the bill; *nostrils* oval, lateral, pervious. *Wings* of mean length, acute, tuberculated, with the second quill-feather the longest. *Legs* of mean length, with the tibiæ naked for a short space above the tarsal joint. *Tarsus* rather longer than the middle toe. *Toes* four, three before and one behind; the front ones rather short and entirely webbed; hind toe barely touching the ground with the tip of the nail. *Claws* slightly hooked, the inner edge of the middle one being dilated.

COMMON SHIELDRAKE.

Anas tadorna, *Linn.*

Tadorna vulpanser, *Flem.*

Le Canard tadorne.

With few exceptions, the Common Shieldrake may be considered one of the most beautiful of its race; there is certainly no European species which exceeds it in graceful motion or simplicity of colouring; and when domesticated, it adds great beauty and ornament to our lakes and sheets of water, where, notwithstanding it is a native of the sea shore, it lives and thrives without any difficulty, sailing about with its mate, which closely resembles it in colouring, as if to display its symmetry and the fine contrast of its tints to the best advantage.

It is distributed throughout the whole of Europe, and is moreover indigenous to the British Isles, breeding upon some parts of our coast in considerable abundance. The situations it chooses for the purpose of nidification are both singular and novel: these are no other than the deserted burrows of the rabbit, which are abundantly scattered over the sand-hills adjacent to the shore on several parts of the coast; and here the female constructs a nest, at the distance of many feet from the entrance, consisting of dried grasses and other vegetable materials, and lined with down from its own breast: the eggs are pure white, and from twelve to sixteen in number. Like many other birds, the male and female sit alternately; and the young so soon as they are hatched are conducted, or, as it is said, frequently carried in the bills of the parents, to the sea, which is the congenial element of this species, as they merely retire inland to the salt marshes and saline lakes for the purpose of feeding.

If we attend to the form of this bird, we cannot fail to observe the situation which it fills in the family to which it belongs: its general characters indicate it as belonging to the true Ducks, while its lengthened tarsus and elevated hind toe, together with its mode of progression on the ground, denote an affinity to the Geese; points which have led to the formation of the genus *Tadorna*, of which this and the *Anas rutila* form the only European examples.

The note of the Common Shieldrake is shrill and whistling. The fleshy tubercle on the top of the upper mandible acquires in the spring a more heightened and brilliant tinge of crimson than it possesses at the other seasons of the year. Its food consists of insects, shelled mollusca, crustacea, and marine plants.

The male and female, as in the true Geese, offer but little difference of plumage; the latter is, however, somewhat smaller in size, and her colours are more obscure. M. Temminck states that it is found in all the northern and western countries of Europe, along the borders of the sea, being abundant in Holland and France, and accidentally appearing in the rivers of Germany and other parts of the Continent.

The whole of the head and upper parts of the neck glossy black; the lower part of the neck, the shoulders, sides of the abdomen, back, tail, upper and under tail-coverts, white; the tail being tipped with black, which colour runs down the middle of the belly, and covers the greater portion of the scapulars and greater quill-feathers; a broad band of chestnut encircles the breast and upper part of the back; speculum of the wing brilliant green; beak bright orange-red; tarsi and feet flesh-colour.

The young have the forehead, fore part of the neck, and under parts, inclining to white.

The Plate represents the male three fourths of the natural size.