



FOOLISH GUILLEMOT.
Uria Troile; (Lath.)

Genus **URIA.**

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* of mean length, straight, strong, compressed, and pointed ; upper mandible slightly arched ; *tomia* intractated ; angle of the lower mandible gently ascending ; *commissure* nearly straight. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, concave, longitudinally cleft, and half covered with the feathers of the *antix*, or projecting side angles of the cranium. *Wings* short, narrow, and acute. *Tail* of twelve or fourteen feathers, very short. *Legs* situated at the back of the abdomen and concealed within its integuments. *Tarsi* short and compressed. *Feet* of three toes, all directed forwards and palmated ; outer and middle toes of equal length, the inner one much shorter. *Claws* fulcate, the middle one the longest.

FOOLISH GUILLEMOT.

Uria Troile, *Linn.*

Le Grand Guillemot.

THE native habitat of this well-known bird extends throughout the northern regions of both hemispheres, and it is probably more abundant than any other of the oceanic birds of the same family. In its habits and manners it is truly aquatic, making the sea its permanent place of residence, except during the season of breeding, when it assembles on the ledges of the precipitous rocks which overhang the deep. In the British dominions, it collects annually in vast multitudes at the high cliffs and the Needle rocks in the Isle of Wight, the Bass rock in the Firth of Forth, the steep rocks on the west and east coast, the Shetlands and Orkneys, and, in fact, any coast whose bold and precipitous rocks afford a place suited for incubation. Here, united with Puffins, Cormorants, Razorbills, and Gulls, the assembled multitude offers to the eye a striking, novel, and animated picture, their continued clamour mingling with the hoarse beating of the sea, and completing a scene of no ordinary interest to the lover of nature ; the Puffin seeking his hole in the rock, the Cormorant and Shag resorting to the topmost cliff, and the broad-winged Gull the lowermost range, covered with scanty herbage, while the Guillemot takes possession of the middle ledges along the face of the precipice, where thousands may be seen patiently performing the work of incubation, each sitting upright on its single large egg, which were it not for its peculiar shape would every moment be swept away from its narrow resting-place. After the breeding-season is over, they again take to the watery element, where, with their young, they traverse the wide ocean, not returning to the rocks till the succeeding spring. After breeding, they appear to undergo a partial moult : they lose their primaries so simultaneously as to be incapable of flight for a considerable period ; a circumstance of little moment, as they easily elude pursuit by diving, in which they excel surprisingly. At this time they also begin to lose the obscure black of the cheeks, which is exchanged for delicate white ; this white also characterizes the young of the year, which can only be distinguished from the adult in winter, by the darker colouring of the body, and by the more abbreviated and fleshy coloured bill. There is no perceptible difference in the sexes at either season.

Independently of the great resort of this bird to the British Isles, they abound in similar situations along the whole of the coast of Northern Europe, whence they gradually migrate southwards on the approach of winter, returning again with the vast shoals of fishes which pass northward in spring.

The whole of the upper surface of the throat and neck is of a uniform sooty black, inclining to grey, with a slender bar of white, which extends half across the wings ; the under surface is a delicate white ; bill blackish brown ; irides dark hazel ; tarsi dark brown, with a slight tinge of olive.

The Plate represents an adult and a young bird of the year of the natural size.



Gould, John. 1837. "Foolish Guillemot. Uria Troile, Linn. Le Grand Guillemot. [Pl. 396]." *The Birds of Europe* 5, <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.317580>.

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