FULIGULA MARILA.

Scaup Duck.

- Anas marila*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 39.
— *frenata*, Sparrm. Mus. Carls., tab. 38.
Fuligula marila, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 198.
— *Gesneri*, Ray; Eyton, Hist. of Rarer Brit. Birds, p. 58.
Nyroca marila, Flem. Phil. of Zool., vol. ii. p. 260.
Aythya marila, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.
— *islandicus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 911.
— *leuconotus*, Brehm, ibid., p. 913.
Marila frenata, Bonap. Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. Sci., tom. xliii. séances des 15 et 22 Sept. 1856.
Anas subterranea, Scopoli (Bonap.).
Fulix marila, Baird, Cat. of N. Amer. Birds in Mus. Smiths. Instit., p. 1.
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How much more numerous are the members of the great family of *Anatidæ*, or Ducks, in all the northern portions of the globe than in the countries lying southward of the equator! Such genera as *Clangula*, *Harelda*, *Fuligula*, *Mareca*, *Nyroca*, *Oidemia*, and *Somateria* are almost wholly wanting in the latter division of the world: they are exclusively northern forms; and species of most (if not of all) of them are inhabitants of the British Islands.

The Scaup Duck with us is strictly a winter visitant; for, although it is stated that Sir William Jardine shot a female attended by her young on a small loch between Loch Hope and Eriboll, in Sutherlandshire, in the month of June 1834, that is, I believe, the only instance of such an occurrence, and it is just possible that he may have been mistaken as to the young bird. Scaups, like many other species, begin to arrive from the north in autumn, and immediately spread themselves over the maritime portion of Britain, where they enter bays, estuaries, and the mouths of all the great rivers, from north to south. If the weather be severe, the London markets receive a fair supply; no epicure, however, would think of purchasing a Scaup for the table, any more than he would a Scoter or a Sheldrake—the flesh of this molluscous-feeding bird being strong, fishy, tough, and unpalatable, when compared with that of the delicate grass-eating Pintail, Teal, Widgeon, and Mallard. The unsavoury nature of its flesh does not, however, detract from its interest in the eyes of the naturalist; for he sees in it the typical illustration of one of the many genera into which the *Anatidæ* are now divided.

In a state of nature the Scaup is a fine showy species, the males with their large dark-green heads and hoary-grey backs presenting a strong contrast to the brown bodies and white faces of the other sex. I am unable to say whether the transformation of plumage common to so many of the males of other Ducks takes place in this species also; in all probability it does, and both sexes closely assimilate in outward appearance just after the season of incubation. In Iceland the Scaup breeds freely, and most of the collectors who have visited that island have had no difficulty in procuring its eggs. Professor Reinhardt states that it is also found in Greenland, at which we need not be surprised, since it is known to inhabit the whole of the northern regions of America, as well as all the countries in the same latitude in the Old World, from Norway to Siberia, China, and Japan; the Scaup is, in fact, a frequenter of the countries just within and without the arctic circle in all situations suitable to its habits. That in the cold season it goes as far south as Amoy, in China, we have the authority of Mr. Swinhoe; while, nearer home, it not only occurs at the same period in all parts of Southern Europe, but also in Algeria and in most of the other provinces of Africa north of the line. In India it is scarce and, according to Mr. Jerdon, is only found on the northern hills.

If the various local faunas of the birds of our islands be consulted, the reader will learn that, according to Mr. Rodd, it is rare in the western districts of Cornwall, a few only occurring in severe weather, that in Morayshire it is now less numerous than formerly (at least so says Mr. St. John); and Mr. Dunn states that it is plentiful in Orkney, but less so in Shetland. These affirmations apply more or less to particular periods; for at one season it may be scarce in those and many other localities, and at another just as numerous. Why this should be, it is not easy to explain; and hence it will answer no good end to enumerate in detail the rivers, lakes, and indentations of the sea in which the Scaup has been seen or shot in this country; but I may state that, besides being found on the southern part of the European continent, it is especially abundant in Holland and in all the fluviatile portions of Austria, Hungary, Turkey, &c.

"The Scaup," says Mr. Selby, "prefers the muddy shores of the ocean or such parts only of rivers as

admit the influence of the tide, where it can obtain a plentiful supply of its chief food, the smaller univalve and bivalve shell-fish. It is in this country a regular winter visitant, and, except in very mild seasons, is numerous distributed along such of our shores as suit its peculiar economy. It seldom arrives before the end of October or the beginning of November; and its influx increases in proportion to the severity of the weather, fresh arrivals constantly occurring as the northern countries become frozen up. On the advance of spring, it again migrates towards the pole, advancing, for the purpose of breeding and passing the summer, to very high latitudes. . . . The Scaup is an excellent diver, and obtains its food by searching the mud beneath with its bill. It also swims well and swiftly; but its flattened shape makes it appear to be deeply immersed in the water. Its flight is strong, but not rapid; and the weight of its body and concavity of its wings compel it always to rise against the wind. It is a very wary bird, and appears to know the precise distance at which it is safe; from which cause, and the resistance given by its plumage, it is not easily killed. In confinement, it soon becomes tame, and, if provided with water, thrives well upon grain and other food eaten by poultry; and under this regimen its flesh is said to improve in flavour, and not to be inferior to that of the Wild Duck. It makes a hoarse grunting sort of noise, and has a singular habit of tossing up its head and opening its bill, particularly during spring, while swimming and sporting on the water." "It is a beautiful sight," says Meyer, "to observe a string of these birds swimming on the sea, and especially to notice the usual manner in which they rise from that element. When one of the extremities of such a long body rises in the air, the rest follow as their turn comes; and thus they are, as it were, drawn up one by one from the surface of the water; and when pursuing their course, they continue to keep the same order in the air; on alighting, the same regularity." Richard Dann informed Mr. Yarrell that "the Scaup Duck, in its migration south, does not make its appearance on the western coast of Europe until late in the winter, and then only in comparatively small numbers; its migration appears to be more southerly than westerly. It breeds on the swamp and lakes towards the north of the Bothnian Gulf, near Lulea, in considerable numbers. I have shot the young there previously to their being able to fly. Being a diving duck, they avoid the reeds, and keep out in the open water. They are also numerous in the Dovre Fjeld mountains, frequenting and breeding near swampy solitary lakes as high as the birch-wood grows. At whatever season the Scaup is shot, it is generally very fat and heavy."

Eggs of the Scaup-Duck were brought from Iceland by Mr. Proctor, who states that the bird is very common there, that it sometimes places its nest among the thick herbage and at others upon the bare stones by the edge of the freshwater lochs, and that it makes only a slight nest of a few stems of grass, but thickly lined with down, and lays from five to eight eggs of a uniform clay-brown, two inches and three-eighths in length, by one inch and five-eighths in breadth.

To show the wild and singular situations resorted to by this bird for the purpose of breeding, the following extract from some details communicated to Mr. Hewitson, by the late John Wolley, may be cited:—"I had not recognized the Scaup-Duck at all amongst the innumerable flocks and families of water-fowl I had seen on the Torneo and Muonio rivers in 1853; but many of the natives had talked of a large kind of 'Sorrti' (tufted Duck), which seemed to be this bird. Soon after the ice was washed out of the river at Muonioniska last spring, I commenced an 'upping' towards the mountains of the Norwegian frontier. After about a week's punting and towing we came to the head quarters of the Scaup-Duck . . . the wider and stiller parts of the river were studded with pairs of this conspicuous bird. At the remote peasant's house called 'Nyimakka' I examined several, which had been caught on artificial floating islets, where the birds get entangled in snares as they climb up to rest and plume themselves. On a little moor at the head of a quiet reach of the river, just where a fierce torrent swept into it, I found a nest which an ermine had lately ransacked; but the favourite little islands where they regularly breed were not yet quite free from snow. Some ten days later, when there should have been eggs upon these islands, they were mostly under water from the unusually high floods, caused by the sudden melting of the snow in the mountains; and the real danger for our lives, as we tossed down the rocky rapids, did not allow us to think of many promising shots."—*Eggs of British Birds*, vol. xi, p. 427.

In Lapland Mr. Wheelwright found the Scaup Duck not uncommon, and he often met with them breeding, both in the low grounds and on the fell-meadows.

The following is a description of the colouring of the soft parts soon after death:—

Male.—Bill, rich leaden blue, with a black nail; irides fine yellow; tarsi and toes light greyish olive, darker or blackish on the joints; the interdigital membranes were also inclined to black.

Female.—Bill leaden black, crossed by a band of grey near the tip; irides, legs, and feet as in the male; weight 2lbs. 7 oz.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the size of life.

Gould, John. 1873. "Scaup Duck, *Fuligula marila* [Pl. 24]." *The birds of Great Britain* 5, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.324068>.

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