HARELDA GLACIALIS.

Walter, Imp.

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HARELDA GLACIALIS.

Long-tailed Duck.

Anas glacialis, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 203.

— *hyemalis*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 44.

— *longicauda*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus. p. 37.

Pagonetia glacialis, Kaup, Natürl. Syst. p. 66.

Crymonessa glacialis, Macg. Man. of Nat. Hist., Orn., vol. ii. p. 186

Harelda glacialis, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 175, pl. 58

Clangula glacialis, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.

DURING the months of summer the Long-tailed Duck frequents the northern regions of Europe, Asia, Greenland, and America, but on the approach of autumn bids farewell for a short period to the land of its birth, and gradually wends its way to the southward; some proceeding to European seas, others to China and Japan, while others, again, wander along the eastern and western coast-lines of America, their progress southward being accelerated or retarded by the nature of the season or the state of the weather; seldom, however, do even solitary individuals proceed so far as the latitudes of the Mediterranean, the Island of Madeira, or the Azores. Scotland, Ireland, and England, lying in the direct line of migration, naturally come in for a full share of visitors; but, as might be expected, the northern parts of our islands are more often favoured with its presence than the southern and western; hence, in the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and in all the armlets of the sea on the eastern side of Scotland, from the mouths of the most northern rivers and Cromarty Bay to the Firth of Forth on the east, and the Clyde on the west, the Longtailed Duck may be seen in such numbers, during the months of autumn, winter, and early spring, as to render the word common an appropriate term. Further south than this (for instance, the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk, and the opposite ones of Lancashire and Wales) it gradually becomes more scarce, and it is only in rigorous winters and at stormy periods that the bird is found in Cornwall and Devonshire. What has been said with regard to the bird's movements in Britain, holds good in all countries of a similar latitude. With us, of course, it does not breed; but in Iceland, Spitsbergen, Nova Zembla, Greenland, Hudson's Bay, and doubtless in northern Siberia it nidifies and rears its young. Those persons who are acquainted with the Mallard (*Anas boschas*) must, as a matter of course, have remarked the changes of plumage which take place in the male after the breeding-season, and have noticed that, having performed the duty of reproduction, he throws off his beautiful green head-dress and short curly tail-feathers, and dons a plumage differing but little from that of his spouse, which he continues to wear until the young are able to fly. Another change then takes place; and by November the Drake is again beautifully attired, and only requires the heightening of the wax-yellow colouring of the bill and the acquisition of the rich glossy green tint on the head to render his appearance sufficiently attractive to enable him to again leave his bachelor life and seek a mate for the ensuing summer. Now this mode of life and a similar transformation of plumage is more or less common to all the members of the *Anatidæ*, whether it be the gaily coloured and richly ornamented Mandarin Duck of China, or the Little Teal of our own islands. In winter and spring the males of those species are conspicuously different from the females; but in summer the sexes can scarcely be distinguished except by dissection. The Long-tailed Duck is similarly metamorphosed at opposite seasons of the year, but, unlike all other Ducks, is as beautiful, although of a different colour, at one season as at another, the plumage of both sexes undergoing a total change, so that they have a dress common to both in summer, and another equally common to both in winter, the only differences being, that the long central tail-feathers and the large crest of the mature male, shown in the front figure of the accompanying Plate, are never seen in the female. In summer the male has the long tail-feathers and a rich chestnut, grey, and black dress: the female has the same colours; but being destitute of the ornamental tail-feathers, her appearance is that of a dumpy short-tailed Duck. From what has been said it will be apparent that the bird is rarely seen in its summer dress in this country; indeed the numerous notes kindly sent to me by Mr. Stevenson and others, as well as the evidence of all previous writers, tend to prove that it seldom, if ever, occurs here at that season.

The somewhat flattened tarsi, large hind toe, and broad interdigital membranes of the Long-tailed Hareld, as it is sometimes called, clearly indicate that it is one of the diving Ducks, and that it descends to the bottom for its food, consisting of mollusks, crustaceans, sea-worms, and other lowly organized inhabitants of the deep. When it accidentally ascends our rivers or resorts to our freshwater lakes and meres, it is out of its place, far removed from its own element, which is low down the tide-way in the brackish salt water.

Here it is seen in small troops of from ten to forty in number, toppling over the waves and looking truly interesting. Such scenes as this may be frequently observed in the Firth of Forth, at the mouths of the larger rivers in Scotland, and in similar situations in some parts of Ireland. Its wing-powers, when assailed by the gunner in his sea-boat, are sufficient to enable it to get out of harm's way, by flying seaward, or from one part of the estuary to another; its diving-powers also are by no means insignificant. It is therefore not readily approachable, and the acquisition of specimens is no easy task. When paired and breeding on the far-off islands of the mysterious northern regions, it is much more tame in disposition, and attired in a dress which closely assimilates in colour to the surrounding herbage of the soppy fells with their moss-covered stones and scanty vegetation.

Professor Reinhardt includes it in his "List of the Birds hitherto observed in Greenland" (Ibis, 1861), but does not furnish us with any details respecting it. Captain Blakiston, in his notes "On the Birds of the Interior of British North America" (Ibis, 1863), mentions that he saw it in Hudson's Bay; and Mr. Ross states that it is abundant on the Mackenzie. Mr. A. E. Verrill, in his "Notes on the Natural History of Anticosti," published in the Proceedings of the Boston Natural-History Society for 1862, states that the Long-tailed Duck breeds abundantly, and is very common there. Mr. A. Newton, in his "Notes on the Birds of Spitsbergen" (Ibis, 1865), says the *Harelda glacialis* "is one of the few regular visitants to that country, where, however, it seems to be scarce; but it occurs as far north as the Dépôt Holm, lat. 80° N., where Dr. Malmgren saw a female bird. He also saw a pair in Kobbe Bay, on the 28th of May, 1861, and in 1864, on the first of August, met with a family party of five on a small pool of fresh water on one of the Horn Sound Islands." Mr. H. Whitely, jun., obtained several specimens at Hakodadi, in Japan, in January 1865, from native bird-catchers, and states that it was common in the harbour in winter (Ibis, 1867); and Mr. R. Brown includes it in his "Synopsis of the Birds of Vancouver Island" (Ibis, 1868). The late Mr. Wheelwright, in his 'Spring and Summer in Lapland,' says:—"The Long-tailed Ducks made their appearance on the Tana river towards the middle of May, and, after remaining there a short time, retired up the fell-lakes to breed. Before breeding, we always saw them in small flocks; and I think of all Ducks these are the most restless; for they are never still, but continually chasing each other about, uttering a pleasing note, which Nilsson likens to the tone of a clarionet, 'a gleck, a gleck.' The only nest I obtained was on the fell-meadow where the Lap Buntings breed. I was walking down a narrow track-way by the side of a fell-lake, on the night of the 27th of June, when I nearly trod upon an old female sitting on her nest. Although her head was turned towards me, she never attempted to rise, and I caught her on the nest, which contained seven fresh eggs. The next morning I saw two young broods on the water, apparently a few days old. During the breeding-season the old males appear to leave the females and congregate in small flocks; and even in the end of June we used to see, occasionally, six or eight males on the river at Quickiock."

Mr. Hewitson "met with this species in Norway in considerable numbers, always in flocks, roving from place to place, and apparently unattached to any particular localities, sometimes sweeping past within a few yards with great rapidity, uttering their strikingly wild musical and most interesting cries.

"Eggs were brought from Iceland by Mr. G. C. Atkinson, who found a nest near the margin of a small lake, lined with down and containing six eggs.

"Mr. Proctor tells me that the bird is common in the last-mentioned country, and that it makes its nest amongst low brushwood and aquatic plants at the edge of the fresh water, of a few stems of grass and reeds, well lined with down, and usually lays from six to ten eggs, which, however, in one instance were twelve in number. When recent they are of an asparagus-green colour, approaching to apple-green, with the shell smooth; of a broad oval form, an inch and eleven twelfths to two inches and a twelfth in length, and generally an inch and a half in breadth."

"The male," says Macgillivray, "in swimming, raises his tail obliquely, in rough water almost erects it, and is remarkable for the grace and vivacity of his movements. Their flight is rapid, direct, and generally performed at the height of a few feet. They rise easily from the water, especially when facing a breeze, and alight rather abruptly. Sometimes during the day, but more frequently at night, they emit various loud rather plaintive cries, as well as cacklings of various shorter guttural notes, which I think can neither be easily imitated nor well expressed in words. In the north-eastern isles this bird is known by the name of Caloe, as well as the whimsical one of Coal-and-Candle-light, both derived from its cries; and in the Hebrides it is named Ianbhochail, ian signifying a bird, and bhochail expressing its soft protracted note."

The front figure in the opposite plate represents a male, of the natural size, in winter plumage, the reduced figures a male and a female in that of summer.

Gould, John. 1873. "Long-tailed Duck, *Harelda glacialis* [Pl. 33]." *The birds of Great Britain* 5, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.324077>.

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