

ON THE PERFECTED PLUMAGE OF THE KING
EIDER (*SOMATERIA SPECTABILIS*).

BY ARTHUR H. NORTON.

IN A private letter written to me by Mr. Fred Rackliff from Big Green Island, Knox Co., Me., under date of December 30, 1898, I have this record: "There are three of the finest King Eiders staying off the east side of the island that you ever saw,—two Drakes and a Duck; they have been here over a month; shall get a shot at them before long."

As a proof of Mr. Rackliff's statement, the Drakes are now before me, and both are indeed fine specimens; but one, a superb Drake, is deserving of more than a passing notice, as it shows a pterylographic adornment, or modification of the outer tertials, not mentioned in the manuals most commonly employed by American students. Two of the outer tertials have their shafts distally depressed, slightly expanded, and curved downward (not laterally as in falcate secondaries); vane outlines asymmetrical by great production of many barbs of the outer web; the barbs of the inner feather have a length of 50 mm.; the vane having tapered suddenly from the base of the feather to this width, becomes suddenly constricted and tapers to the end of the feather which terminates with the naked shaft; the posterior outline of the vane is crescentic, owing to the backward direction of the barbs forming the point of the vane.

The produced parts of the vanes fold, the superior or inner of which is the longer, enclosing the inferior or outer, and both curve slightly upward from the plane of the back at a little less than an angle of 45° , having the effect of a pair of pyramids rising from the posterior border of the scapulars.

Nearly all of the so-called adult Drakes of this species which I have examined, show, though in a far less degree, a production of a part of the outer web of corresponding tertials, suggesting that this adornment is common in the highest phase of maturity,

which according to Temminck, on the authority of Sabine, is not attained until four years (Temm., Man., II, 852).

Though this species has been otherwise minutely described, there exists considerable discrepancy concerning the nomenclature of the delicate colors. I hope, therefore, that a detailed description of the color masses of this specimen, based upon Mr. Ridgway's 'Nomenclature of Colors,' may not seem superfluous.

As the specimens are dried and without full field data, I have nothing to offer concerning the colors of the naked parts, but these have been described by Brisson, Audubon, Baird and associates, as well as by Dr. Coues.

Band of feathers around frontal processes extending backward in a point over lore, wide spot under and extending behind the eye, narrow line around upper eyelid, large A-shaped mark from chin along sides of gular region (57 mm. long), scapulars, tertials, secondaries, primaries, and their coverts, alulae, greater wing coverts, pelvic region of back (tergum¹), tail with both series of coverts, sides except sides of rump, and under parts (venter²) black, very pure and deep on head, throat, venter, rump, secondaries, tertials, and both series of tail-coverts. The scapulars are washed with slate; the primaries, their coverts, alulae, and tail brownish, the four falcate secondaries having brownish shafts.

A spot above the rictus, the chin, upper throat, and sides of neck squarely joining the buff below, entire back of neck below the nape, interscapular wedge, large area at base of tail, median and lesser wing-coverts white. Marginal coverts dusky, with broad hoary tips. Hood extends from forehead and includes the nape, not, however, reaching upper border of the eye. Pileum proper cinereous, deepening to plumbeous on the nape. Lower border of pileum forming a large supra-oral area and narrow line to ear, pearl gray, joined at the ear by a dusky line which reaches around the nape, thus enclosing the plumbeous area. Spot above the eye and narrow line of normal feathers below border of hood very pale wash of malachite green. Sides of head covered with feathers rendered abnormal by their barbs becoming stiffened, and destitute of barbules for at least their exposed portions, thus rendering the parts so covered iridescent: these nude barbs are malachite green in color, but feathers have barbuled bases white, which color, showing through the separated points, gives the cheeks a washed green appearance, so that it has been justly deemed "exceedingly difficult of imitation by colorists."

¹ Sundevall's Tentamen, Nicholson's Trans., p. 297.

² Sundevall's Tentamen, Nicholson's Trans., p. 298.

The loreal and auricular regions are quite rich green. Jugulum and lower throat abruptly joining white above and black below, rich ochraceous buff.

The frontal processes are much more developed than the one shown in the splendid figure in Ridgway's 'Manual,' its anterior outline at a right angle with the line of the tomium, the farthest point from tomium being 38 mm., its greatest width 27 mm., its least width 18 mm., while the greatest depth of bill is 17 mm. The other Drake shows respectively 34, 24, 17 and 18 mm.

Though the birds were reported at the close of December, they spent the winter at the place secure from the various strategies used to approach them, or lure them within shot of the shore, and so it was the beginning of April before they came into the hands of this expert collector. This was due to the fact that the depth of water required to yield their favorite food, — which upon dissection proved to be young holothurians (*Pentacta froudosa*), — kept them farther from the shore than *Somateria dresseri* is accustomed to feed, and this animal being abundant at their chosen spot, they would not condescend to approach decoys as *S. dresseri* did.

According to Hagerup, *S. spectabilis* habitually feeds in deeper water than that required by *Somateria mollissima borealis* in Greenland where both species are abundant (Birds of Greenland, p. 19).

RANGES OF *HYLOCICHLA FUSCESCENS*, AND *HYLOCICHLA FUSCESCENS SALICICOLA* IN NORTH AMERICA.

BY REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR.

WHILE looking over the Ornithological Collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, I came across a peculiar specimen of Wilson's Thrush (*Hylocichla fuscescens*) taken at Newport, Rhode Island, by R. L. Agassiz on the very late date for this locality of September 25, 1885. A few days later I happened to