

LASSCO

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THREE PIGEONS

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THE EARED GREBE.—*Pelecanus auritus*.

THE birds of the family of *Colymbidae*, or Divers, are so formed as to be remarkably well fitted for the water, on which they chiefly dwell. On land they are heavy and inactive, shuffling along like seals; but on its own element the Grebe looks quite a different creature, alert and vigorous, and chasing the fish for food with the swiftness of an arrow. The above cut represents a male Eared Grebe in full plumage, and a young bird of the same species. The reader's attention is called to the foot of the large bird. The toes differ from those of every other kind of water-bird. They are not webbed like the duck's or those of other swimming birds; but the toes are separate and flattened, each toe being in itself a well-formed ear. The legs are placed far back in the body, giving the creature a great advantage in swimming, but causing its awkward gait when on land. The head of the Eared Grebe is narrow, the beak long and sharp, the neck long, the body boat-shaped. The crest on its head, and the ruff round its neck, give it a strange, but pretty appearance. When diving for its prey, its short wings add much to its speed, which is amazing. The food of this singular bird consists of fishes and water-insects; but it has been observed, that in the stomach is generally found a mass of its own feathers; these having probably been swallowed by it whilst dressing its feathers, which are thick, full, soft, and silky. Thus in the stomach of the cow is often found a ball of hair, which the animal has taken into its mouth whilst licking its coat, and swallowed, but not digested. The Grebes lay their nests among the reeds and herbage of marshes. The nest is made of half-decayed roots, and other dead vegetable matter; it is large and strong, though roughly built, and is so put together that it may rise or fall with the rise or fall of the water on which it floats. The female lays three or four eggs, which she carefully covers up every time she ventures to leave the nest. These interesting birds are found in every quarter of the globe. The Eared Grebe is a rare bird in our island.

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