

"The flesh of the young birds, at the season, when they are called *"Flappers,"* is very tender and delicious, and it is a matter of regret that very many of them are then killed for the table."

The following are Wilson's remarks on this species:—"This species is generally known along the sea-coast of New Jersey, and the neighbouring country, by the name of the Black Duck, being the most common and most numerous of all those of its tribe that frequent the salt marshes. It is only partially migratory. Numbers of them remain during the summer, and breed in sequestered places in the marsh, or on the sea-islands of the beach. The eggs are eight or ten in number, very nearly resembling those of the Domestic Duck. Vast numbers, however, regularly migrate farther north on the approach of spring. During their residence here in winter, they frequent the marshes, and the various creeks and inlets with which those extensive flats are intersected. Their principle food consists of those minute snail shells so abundant in the marshes. They occasionally visit the sandy beach in search of small bivalves, and, on these occasions, sometimes cover whole acres with their numbers. They roost at night in the shallow ponds, in the middle of the salt marsh, particularly on islands, where many are caught by the foxes. They are extremely shy during the day; and, on the most distant report of a musket, rise from every quarter of the marsh in prodigious numbers, dispersing in every direction. In calm weather they fly high, beyond the reach of shot; but when the wind blows hard, and the gunner conceals himself among the salt grass, in a place over which they usually fly, they are shot down in great numbers; their flight being then low. Geese, Brant, and Black Duck, are the common game of all our gunners along this part of the coast during the winter; but there are at least ten Black Ducks for one Goose or Brant, and probably many more. Their voice resembles that of the Duck and Mallard; but their flesh is greatly inferior, owing to the nature of their food. They are, however, large, heavy-bodied Ducks, and generally esteemed.

"I cannot discover that this species is found in any of the remote northern parts of our continent; and this is probably the cause why it is altogether unknown in Europe. It is abundant from Florida to New England; but is not enumerated among the birds of Hudson's Bay, or Greenland. Its chief residence is on the sea-coast, though it also makes extensive excursions up the tide waters of our rivers. Like the Mallard, they rarely dive for food, but swim and fly with great velocity."

The specific name is derived from the Latin (*obscurus*), blackish or dark coloured.

The following is the technical description given by AUDUBON:—

*Anas obscura*, GMEL. Dusky Duck.

Tail much rounded, of eighteen acute feathers, none of which are recurved; bill yellowish-green; feet orange-red, the webs dusky; upper part of head glossy brownish black, the feathers margined with light brown; sides of head and a band over the eye light greyish-brown, with longitudinal dusky streaks; general colour blackish-brown, a little paler beneath, all the feathers margined with pale reddish-brown; wing-coverts greyish-dusky, with a faint tinge of green; ends of secondary coverts velvet black; primaries and their coverts blackish-brown; secondaries