

appear in a semicircle, it becomes confounded, and does not know which way to escape. They generally prefer running against the wind; yet at the first start they expand their wings, and, like a vessel, make all sail. On one fine hot day I saw several ostriches enter a bed of tall rushes, where they squatted concealed, till quite closely approached. It is not generally known that ostriches readily take to the water. Mr. King informs me that at the Bay of San Blas, and at Port Valdes in Patagonia, he saw these birds swimming several times from island to island. They ran into the water both when driven down to a point, and likewise of their own accord when not frightened: the distance crossed was about two hundred yards. When swimming very little of their bodies appear above water; their necks are extended a little forward, and their progress is slow. On two occasions I saw some ostriches swimming across the Santa Cruz River, where its course was about four hundred yards wide, and the stream rapid. Captain Sturt,¹ when descending the Murrumbidgee, in Australia, saw two emus in the act of swimming.

The inhabitants of the country readily distinguish, even at a distance, the cock bird from the hen. The former is larger and darker-colored,² and has a bigger head. The ostrich, I believe the cock, emits a singular, deep-toned, hissing note: when first I heard it, standing in the midst of some sand-hillocks, I thought it was made by some wild beast, for it is a sound that one cannot tell whence it comes, or from how far distant. When we were at Bahia Blanca, in the months of September and October, the eggs, in extraordinary numbers, were found all over the country. They lie either scattered and single—in which case they are never hatched, and are called by the Spaniards huachos—or they are collected together into a shallow excavation, which forms the nest. Out of the four nests which I saw, three contained twenty-two eggs each, and the fourth

¹ Sturt's Travels, vol. ii. p. 74.

² A Gaucho assured me that he had once seen a snow-white or Albino variety, and that it was a most beautiful bird.