Laurus Major. Rostro inaequali.

The Cut Water.

The bill, which is the characteristic note of this bird, is a wonderful work of nature. The base of the upper mandible is thick and compressed sideways gradually to the end, and terminates in a point, and is three inches long. The under mandible is more compressed than the upper, and very thin, both edges being as sharp as a knife, and is almost an inch longer than the upper mandible, which has a narrow groove or channel, into which the upper edge of the lower mandible fits. Half the bill, next the head, is red, the rest is black; the forepart of the head, neck, breast and belly white; the hind part of the head, back and wings black, with a small mixture of white. The upper feather of the tail is black, the rest white. The legs are short and small, of a red colour. The feet are webbed like those of a gull, with a small back toe. These birds frequent near the coasts of Carolina. They fly close to the surface of the water, from which they seem to receive somewhat of food. They also frequent oyster-banks, on which, I believe, they feed. The structure of their bills seem adapted to that purpose. The cocks and hens are alike in colour.