

## PURPLE SANDPIPER.

*Tringa maritima*, *Brunn.*

Le Becasseau violet.

“ THE locality of this species,” says Mr. Selby, “ being strictly confined to the rocky coasts of the ocean, and seldom found upon the flat and sandy shores, (the usual resort of most of the maritime scolopaceous birds,) has occasioned its falling less frequently under the notice of ornithologists, and its history has been consequently involved in much obscurity, and there is some difficulty in collating the synonyms under which it has been described by different authors.”

The most remarkable feature presented by this species of Sandpiper consists in the great difference of colour between it and the rest of the genus, the plumage during a great portion of the year, and especially the breeding-season, having a rich violet lustre; we have also seen specimens exhibiting traces of the barred markings of black and red, so conspicuous in the Knot (*Tringa Canutus*), to which species the Purple Sandpiper evidently bears a close affinity. The specimens referred to as resembling the Knot were, we must observe, from the region of the Arctic circle, whither this bird is supposed to retire, for the purpose of incubation, when it leaves us in April, and from whence it again returns to the temperate portions of Europe early in autumn, appearing in our island in October, and frequenting the rocky shores, particularly promontories, artificial jetties, and embankments. On the Northumberland coast and in the Fern Islands, Mr. Selby informs us it is very common, and he further remarks that he has met with the young in the month of June, a circumstance which proves that at least occasionally it breeds in our island.

Like many other species of the genus it congregates in small flocks, and has the same wheeling flight which distinguishes the Dunlin, &c.

Its food consists of small shelled mollusca, marine plants, and minute crustacea.

The Purple Sandpiper appears to be very widely distributed, at least over the northern portions of the globe, being common in the northern parts of America, as well as those of Europe and Asia.

In winter the head and neck are greyish black tinged with brown; orbits, eye-streak, and chin greyish white; breast grey inclining to brown, many of the feathers being darker in the centre and margined with white; belly and under tail-coverts white, streaked and spotted with dark brown; back and scapulars greyish black with purple reflections, and each feather margined with grey; wing-coverts greyish black margined and tipped with white, forming a bar across the wings; secondaries nearest the tertials almost wholly white, the rest only tipped with white; rump and upper tail-coverts blackish brown; middle tail-feathers greyish black; outer ones lighter grey margined with white; bill reddish orange at the base; blackish at the tip; legs and feet ochreous yellow.

In summer the whole of the plumage becomes darker, the purple hue more conspicuous; the feathers on the head are margined with greyish white, and the spots on the breast are more distinct.

In the young the whole of the plumage is of a dull greyish black, margined with dirty yellowish brown; the sides of the neck and breast are grey, with darker streaks; and the flanks and under tail-coverts are streaked longitudinally with deep ash grey.

We have figured an adult of the natural size.