

PYGMY CURLEW.

Tringa subarquata, *Temm.*

Le Bécasseau cocorli.

THE Pygmy Curlew in its winter plumage has been frequently confounded with the Purre; the beak, however, is longer, rather more slender, as well as more curved; the legs longer and thinner, and the bare part above the joint of greater extent; there is also a constant and marked difference in the upper tail-coverts, which in this bird are invariably white, but in the Purre the central tail-coverts are of the same colour as the feathers of the back. In their decided summer plumage and the various consequent vernal and autumnal changes, in both, the differences are too obvious to require particular notice.

The Pygmy Curlew has been considered also a very rare British bird, and one that did not breed in this country: we have reason, however, to believe,—from the various specimens we have seen and obtained in their most perfect nuptial dress, some of which will be more particularly referred to hereafter, and the several young birds which could only very recently have quitted their nest,—that the Pygmy Curlew breeds every year on various parts of our coast. We have ourselves shot the male, in full summer plumage, at the end of May in the present year (1833), near Sandwich, and have received adult birds equally fine, with the young, from Yarmouth early in July. In its habits it resembles the Purre, flying in flocks in company with other shore birds, and like them also feeding on marine insects, worms, minute mollusca, and crustacea. The male specimen, in summer plumage, from which our right-hand figure was drawn and coloured, we killed out of a flock, and brought down at the same shot a Purre and a Ring Dottrell.

The Pygmy Curlew frequents the shores of the European continent generally, being most observable in spring and autumn: it also inhabits Africa and North America. In its winter plumage, represented by the bird on the left side of our Plate, the throat, neck, breast, all the under parts, and the upper tail-coverts, are pure white; crown and sides of the head, back, scapulars and wing-coverts, ash brown, the shaft and middle of each feather being rather darker; wing-primaries black; tail-feathers ash colour edged with white; beak black; irides dark brown; legs brownish black. During the season of producing the young, the feathers on the top of the head are varied with spots of black and reddish brown; throat, breast and abdomen chestnut red, some of the feathers tipped with white; upper and under tail-coverts white slightly barred across with black and red; back, scapulars and tertials nearly black, the feathers varied on their margins with red and ash grey; some of the wing-coverts remain unchanged; the primaries black; tail-feathers dusky brown with lighter edges.

The intermediate states of plumage, as they appear in spring and autumn, may be inferred from a previous knowledge of the appearance of the bird in winter and summer, the feathers on the breast changing by degrees from white to red, and afterwards regaining the white; those on the back alternating between ash colour and red brown.

The young birds of the year most resemble the adult bird in winter; but the feathers on the upper surface of the body and wings have broad edges of yellowish white; the under surface tinged with buff colour; the legs brown.

M. Temminck states, that this bird occasionally breeds in Holland near the edge of the water, laying four eggs, yellowish white, spotted with brown.

We have figured two birds of their natural size.