

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER.

Tringa rufescens, Vieill.

Le Tringa roussâtre.

THIS prettily marked Sandpiper was first made known (Linn. Trans., vol. xvi.) as an occasional visitor to England by Mr. Yarrell, who possesses a specimen killed in Cambridgeshire in 1826. In the following year a specimen was killed in France, which is now deposited in the Paris Museum; since which another example has been killed in England at Sherringham in Norfolk, which is preserved in a collection of birds in that county.

This species was first discovered in Louisiana by M. Vieillot, and was unknown to Wilson and other American ornithologists of that time. Mr. Thomas Nuttall of Boston, the author of 'A Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and Canada,' says this elegant species in some seasons is not uncommon in the market of Boston in the months of August and September, being met with near the capes of Massachusetts Bay. It has also been obtained in the vicinity of New York. From its having been found in Louisiana, Mr. Nuttall infers that coursing along the shores of the Mississippi, and thus penetrating inland, it probably proceeds by this route, as well as by that of the sea coast, to its northern destination to breed, and is often seen associated with the Pectoral Sandpiper, which it resembles very much in size and bill, though perfectly distinct in plumage.

Mr. Audubon appears not to have met with this bird in America, beyond procuring a specimen at Boston. The geographical range of this Sandpiper is very extensive. Captain James Clark Ross possesses a wing of this species, (which from the very peculiar markings of its under surface cannot be mistaken,) received from a sailor of the crew, who found it in the course of one of the numerous inland excursions in the desolate regions of the North from which these intrepid navigators have recently returned. It is therefore probable that it breeds near the arctic circle. From M. Natterer we learn that this species is common in Brazil, and we have already noticed its occurrence three times in Europe.

Mr. Nuttall states that in America its food consists principally of land and marine insects, particularly grasshoppers, which, abounding there in autumn, become the favourite prey of a variety of birds.

Top of the head dark brown, the feathers edged with very light brown; back of the neck light brown, with minute longitudinal darker spots; the back dark brown, the extreme edges light brown; wing-coverts brown; primaries nearly black, tipped with white, the shafts white; tertials brown, edged with light brown; tail cuneiform; the coverts brown, with lighter borders; the centre feathers black; the shafts and edges lighter; the feathers on each side light brown, inclosed by a zone of black and edged with white; chin, sides of the neck, throat, and breast light brown, tinged with buff; abdomen, flanks, and under tail-coverts white; sides of the neck spotted; anterior portion of the under wing rufous brown; under wing-coverts pure white; inner webs of the primaries speckled; secondaries mottled, and ending in sabre-shaped points; the legs light brown.

Mr. Audubon informs us that the female is somewhat larger than the male, which it resembles in colour, but has the lower parts paler, and the feathers of the upper parts of a lighter brown, with an inner margin of brownish black and an outer one of greyish yellow.

In young birds the tints are said to be much lighter, the primaries more spotted, some of the inner wing-coverts also mottled; all the upper plumage more broadly edged with pale buff, on the back inclining to white. The colour beneath is also buff, becoming almost white on the belly and vent.

We have figured an adult male and female of the natural size.