

Genus **MACRORHAMPHUS**, *Leach*.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* very long, straight, rounded, rather slender in the middle, the tip dilated, somewhat incurved and rugose. *Nostrils* lateral, basal. *Legs* four-toed; the outer *toes* connected at their base by a membrane; hinder *toe* touching the ground only at the tip; lower part of the *tibiæ* naked. *Wings* long and pointed.

GREY SNIFE.

Macrorhamphus griseus, *Leach*.

La Becassine ponctuée.

THE bird now before us has the beak of a *Scolopax*, but with this it also possesses toes connected by a membrane; to this we may add, that its habits and the peculiar periodical change of plumage to which it is subject, still further prove its alliance to the species of the genus *Tringa*. Dr. Leach, however, considered it sufficiently removed both from Snipes and Sandpipers to warrant the adoption of a separate generic distinction, and we have followed his example.

This bird occurs but seldom in Europe. A single specimen has been taken in Sweden. A second was obtained in England on the Devonshire coast, which came into the possession of Colonel Montagu, and is preserved in the British Museum: this specimen is in the plumage peculiar to the winter season. A third example has been shot at Yarmouth, which was in the plumage of summer. No other instances, that we are aware of, are recorded. It is, on the contrary, very plentiful on the Western shores of North America, from the United States, even to the Arctic circle; and to the excellent work of Wilson we are indebted for the best account of its habits and æconomy.

"The Red-breasted Snipe," as it is called by Wilson, on account of the prevailing colour of its summer plumage, "arrives on the sea-coast of New Jersey early in April; it is seldom or never seen inland: early in May it proceeds to the North to breed, and returns by the latter part of July or beginning of August. During its stay, it flies in flocks, sometimes very high, and has then a loud and shrill whistle, making many evolutions over the marshes; forming, dividing, and reuniting. They sometimes settle in such numbers, and so close together, that eighty-five have been shot at one discharge of a musket. They frequent the sand-bars and mud-flats at low water, in search of food; and being less suspicious of a boat than of a person on shore, are easily approached by this medium, and shot down in great numbers."

"These birds," says Wilson, "of all our sea-side Snipes, are the most numerous, and the most delicious for the table. They doubtless breed not far to the northward of the United States, if we may judge from the lateness of the season when they leave us in spring, the large size of the eggs in the ovaries of the females before they depart, and the short period of time they are absent." This hiatus in their history has been supplied by Dr. Richardson in his Fauna of North America, who says, "they are well known in the fur-countries, and have an extensive breeding range from the borders of Lake Superior to the Arctic Sea."

The whole length of this bird is nearly eleven inches, the bill two inches and a half. In winter, the head, neck, breast and wing-coverts are uniform ash-coloured brown; a streak of the same colour from the base of the beak to the eye; throat, belly and thighs pure white; flanks white, varied with light brown; back and scapulars light brown, each feather with a darker brown edge; rump, upper and under tail-coverts white, with black cross bars; tail-feathers twelve, crossed with narrow black and white bars alternately; the beak dark greenish black; legs dull green. In summer, the top of the head and neck, back and scapulars are irregularly varied with black, reddish brown, and yellow; the space round the eye bright red; front of the neck and breast reddish buff; wing-coverts ash-colour and edged with white; belly, rump and tail the same as in winter. The female is paler on the back, and less ruddy on the breast.

The figures on our Plate represent the plumage of both seasons.