

JACK SNIPE.

Scolopax Gallinula, Linn.

Le Becassine sourde.

THE Jack Snipe, although equally as abundant as the Common Snipe during the autumn and winter, quits us entirely on the approach of spring, and retires to more northern countries, probably within the regions of the arctic circle, where, in company with numerous others of the feathered race, it remains to incubate, and again returns to us in the months of October and November, when as long as the weather is open it may be found in any of the marshy districts of this country, and throughout the Continent generally. We have reason to believe, however, that Europe alone constitutes its true and almost exclusive habitat; for although it may be occasionally met with out of Europe, it is extremely rare. Among all the numerous collections from the Himalaya mountains we do not recollect having seen more than one specimen. It is by far the least of the true *Scolopacidae*, its weight being seldom more than two ounces. The Jack Snipe usually frequents the same localities as the Common Snipe, but differs from it considerably in its habits and manners; for while the latter is somewhat shy and easily flushed, the Jack Snipe, on the contrary, will frequently allow itself to be almost trodden upon before it can be forced to take wing. And we cannot fail to remark how beautifully the colouring of this bird assimilates with the ground and the surrounding herbage among which it lies, which, together with its motionless manner of lying, renders it most difficult to be discerned, unless the spot on which it sits is most carefully and scrutinously examined. The individual from which our drawing is taken was captured alive by ourselves with the hand, from before the nose of the pointer.

Its flight, although often extremely rapid, is seldom prolonged to any distance, the bird generally alighting again immediately, except on the approach of the vernal migration, when we have seen it mount in the air and totally disappear, without even uttering the alarm cry usual with this and other members of the genus. Its flesh has a most delicate flavour, but from its diminutive size it is not so much sought after by the sportsman as the larger common species.

It is said to breed in bogs and morasses, and according to M. Temminck the eggs are four in number.

The sexes offer no difference in the markings of their plumage, which undergoes little or no change in spring or summer. The young acquire the adult colouring, although not so bright, from the time they leave the nest.

A band of black spotted with yellowish red extends from the forehead to the nape; a distinct band of buff passes over the eye; the remainder of the face is alternately striped with black and light buff; throat whitish; upper part of the chest yellowish brown, blotched with spots of brown; back and scapulars blackish brown with green and bronze-like purple reflections; the latter feathers are long and narrow, and have their outer edges of rich buff, forming two longitudinal bands down each side; wing-coverts blackish brown, each feather margined with light brown; tail brownish black edged with rich brown; abdomen white; flanks and lower parts longitudinally streaked with brown; legs olive; bill greyish olive.

The Plate represents two birds of the natural size.