

Genus SCOLOPAX, *Linn.*

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* long, straight; the tip obtuse, rounded, and ending with an internal knob; both mandibles, in dead birds, rugose behind the tip; under mandible shorter than the upper, which is sulcated for nearly the whole of its length. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, placed in the commencement of the groove, linear, longitudinal, covered with a membrane. *Wings* having the first and second quills of nearly equal length and the longest. *Legs* slender; the tibiae either entirely plumed or naked for a short space above the tarsal joint. *Feet* four-toed, three before and one behind, the former cleft to the origin, the latter short and its tip only resting on the ground.

WOODCOCK.

Scolopax rusticola, *Linn.*

Le Becasse ordinaire.

So well has the history of this familiar, and to the sportsman favourite, bird been detailed by various British and Continental authors, among whom we may especially mention Mr. Selby, that we shall confine our remarks more to its geographical distribution than to those minor details with which most persons must be familiar: but before entering upon these particulars, we would here express our decided opinion that the present bird, with the Woodcock of the United States of America, and, if we mistake not, one or two other species, may with strict propriety be separated into a distinct genus, which has indeed been done by M. Vieillot under the name of *Rusticola*; for not only is the difference in form between the Woodcock and Snipe very apparent, but there is a still greater diversity in their habits and manners.

In England and we believe in nearly every portion of Europe, the Woodcock is a migratory species: a few pairs, it is true, stay with us to breed, but the great mass undoubtedly pass northwards, even to within the limits of the arctic circle, tenanted during summer the wilds and forests of that desolate region; and as soon as the work of incubation is over, they commence in vast hordes their southward flight, our island being merely a resting-place for a large portion of them in their progress towards still more southern latitudes; hence the promontories of Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, and Devonshire abound with them at the periods of their vernal and autumnal migrations. From these summer haunts, which appear to extend throughout the Old World portion of the zone, they radiate southwards, not only through Europe, but to the vast regions of Asia, penetrating even into India, whence we have received numerous specimens differing in no respect from those killed in our own island.

There is scarcely any difference in the appearance of the sexes, and they do not undergo any decided periodical change in their plumage.

The nest is generally placed in a thicket, near the root of a tree or shrub, and is merely a slight hole lined with a few dead leaves and grass; the eggs are four in number, of a yellowish white, blotched with pale chestnut brown, and in Sweden and other parts of the Continent are considered a great delicacy for the table.

The food of the Woodcock consists principally of worms, which it procures by inserting its long bill into the earth.

Forehead and top of the head grey; hind part of the head and neck marked with four broad brownish black bars; the intermediate spaces reddish white; from the gape to the eye a streak of deep brown; chin white; on each side of the neck a patch of brown; upper surface a mixture of rufous brown, pale dull yellow and grey, with large spots and zigzag transverse lines and bars of black, which colour is deepest on the back and scapulars; rump and tail-coverts pale chestnut brown with pale reddish white tips and narrow transverse bars of black; tail black varied with chestnut brown; the tips of the feathers grey above and pure white below; quills dusky, outer webs having triangular bars of chestnut brown; under surface greyish white tinged with yellowish brown and barred transversely with brown of a darker tint; vent and under tail-coverts yellowish white, with a triangular spot of black in the centre; legs flesh-red tinged with grey.

We have figured an adult bird of the natural size.