

Genus STREPSILAS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* as short as the head, strong, thick at the base, tapering gradually to the point, forming an elongated cone: upper *mandible* the longest, rather blunt at the end. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, linear, pervious, partly covered by a membrane. *Wings* long, pointed, first quill-feather the longest. *Feet* four-toed, three before, one behind, the anterior toes united by a membrane at the base, and furnished with narrow rudimentary interdigital membranes; hind-toe articulated up the tarsus and only touching the ground at the tip.

TURNSTONE.

Strepsilas collaris, Temm.

Le Tourne-pierre à collier.

ONLY one species of this genus has hitherto been discovered by naturalists, which, when in the adult state, is as remarkable for the beauty and variety of its plumage as for the singularity of its form. It is found on our shores, and particularly those of our eastern coast, during the greater part of the year, but absents itself from May to July, and proceeds northward to breed. Dr. Fleming states, that having seen this bird at all seasons in Zetland, he concludes it breeds there. It also breeds in Norway, on the shores of the Baltic, in the North Georgian Isles; and our intrepid Arctic voyagers found it at Melville Island, from whence they brought some of its eggs. This bird is found also in Africa and America.

The Turnstone frequents the sandy and gravelly parts of the sea-shore, where it feeds upon insects, small mollusca, and crustacea, which it finds under stones, for the turning over of which its wedge-shaped beak is admirably adapted. In its habits it differs from the Sandpipers generally, as it is not observed to fly in flocks, or, like them, to frequent the soft and oozy mud left by the retiring tide. It is lively and quick in its motions, and runs from place to place in search of its food with rapidity.

The adult male has the forehead, the space between the beak and the eye, throat, nape and side of the neck, lower part of the back, upper tail-coverts, breast, and all the under parts, pure white; the top of the head is mottled with black; below the eye and on the sides and front of the neck the plumage is black, with two narrow black bands passing backwards from the upper and under edges of the base of the beak. The black feathers on the side and bottom of the neck also extend backwards, forming two collars more or less perfect; the back, scapulars and wing-coverts, are reddish brown varied with black; primaries black on the outer webs, secondaries tipped with white; rump black; outer tail-feathers on each side white, the others black tipped with white; beak black; irides dark brown; legs orange red.

The plumage of the female is generally less brilliant than that of the adult male.

Young birds of the year have the throat white; the darker parts of the head and neck ash brown; back, scapulars and wing-coverts dusky brown, with lighter edges; all the under parts white. As the season advances, the feathers on the lower part of the neck in front become nearly black; the centre of the feathers on the back and wings much darker, with broad rufous edges, assuming by degrees the brilliancy of old birds, which is nearly acquired by the end of the following spring.

Some difference of opinion exists as to the colour of the eggs of the Turnstone. By M. Temminck and some other foreign naturalists it has been described and figured as having a green or ash-coloured ground, spotted with dark brown or black. Mr. Lewin's figure represents it ash green with spots of two colours, both dark. An egg, marked "Turnstone," in the extensive collection at the British Museum has a reddish white ground spotted with dark red, and we have seen one of the specimens brought from Melville Island which was exactly of the same colour.

We have figured a male in his adult plumage, and a young bird in that of the first autumn.