

Genus TOTANUS, *Bechst.*

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* long, rounded, solid, hard, and drawn to a point; in some species slightly incurved; upper mandible sulcated, the furrow generally about half the length of the bill; the tip arched and curving over that of the lower one; tomia of both mandibles bending inwards progressively to the point. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, linear, longitudinally cleft in the furrow of the mandible. *Legs* long, slender, naked above the tarsal joint. *Toes* three before, and one behind; the front ones united at their base by a membrane; that connecting the outer with the middle one always the largest; hind toe short, and barely touching the ground with its tip, or nail; fronts of the tarsi and toes scutellated.

COMMON SANDPIPER.

Totanus Hypoleucos, *Temm.*

Le Chevalier Guinette.

THOSE who have had opportunities of observing this little emigrant in a state of nature must, we think, have been gratified with its tame and inoffensive disposition, and we should suppose would be desirous of knowing more of its history. Unlike many others of its tribe, which are capable of braving with impunity the severities of our hardest winters, the present delicate little bird appears to be adapted to climates of a milder kind, and to inhabit peculiar localities. Arriving here about the end of April, it retreats to inland lakes, rivers, and small brooks, the banks of which it enlivens during the whole of the summer with its active and sprightly habits and simple note. The task of incubation is commenced soon after its arrival, the female depositing her four delicate eggs, of a pale reddish white ground spotted with darker red, on the bank near the water's edge, a mere hollow in the soil or depression in the shingle serving instead of a nest; sometimes, however, it is lined with dried grass, leaves, &c. It is to be feared that the timid disposition of this bird militates much against its security, and that a great portion of those which resort to our navigable rivers and canals fall a sacrifice to the gun, or are otherwise so much disturbed as to prevent their accomplishing this task, for which alone they have been impelled hither; those, on the contrary, which have chosen situations of greater safety and retirement have in a few weeks accomplished the process of incubation, and their half-fledged young soon trip nimbly over the sand and oozy mud, and a short period longer enables them to wing their way after their parents and to seek both food and safety for themselves. Unlike the Dunlin and other marine species whose immense flights almost astonish us, the Common Sandpiper can scarcely be called gregarious, four or six in company being of rare occurrence. Although not very numerous, it inhabits every part of Europe, over which it is dispersed in pairs; and not unfrequently a single individual is observed in solitary retirement, having been bereft of its mate, or by some other circumstance left by itself. In the British Isles the adults commence their autumnal migrations southwards about September, preceding the young by a few weeks, which period allows the latter to gain sufficient strength to perform a fatiguing journey across the Channel to seek retirement in the hotter portions of Europe; and in all probability the northern regions of Africa are not beyond the limits of their annual range. Independently of Europe and Africa, we have observed skins of this species from several parts of India, which proves its range over the Old World to be widely extended. Its place in America is supplied by the well-known Spotted Sandpiper *Totanus macularius*, which occurs in Europe only as a rare visitant.

The sexes are so strictly alike in their colouring as to render a separate description quite unnecessary. The young of the year have the edges of the feathers fringed with a margin of greyish white; in other respects they resemble the adults.

The food of the Common Sandpiper consists of insects of various kinds, to which are added small shelled snails, worms, crustacea, &c., in capturing which, its motions are not less elegant than graceful, running with agility over the oozy mud and sand-banks, often exhibiting a peculiar and singular jerking of the tail and a nodding of the head not unlike that of the Common Water-hen and some of the terrestrial pigeons of the West Indies. Its flight is somewhat slow and flapping, as if performed with considerable exertion, passing so close to the surface of the water as scarcely to avoid wetting the pinions: while flying, it utters its plaintive monotonous call, which is repeated at short intervals until it alights on the opposite side.

Head and upper surface light brown, glossed with olive green; the feathers of the back and scapulars marked with transverse zigzag lines of dark brown, producing a mottled appearance; greater wing-coverts tipped with white; the lesser coverts transversely barred with brown; the first two quill-feathers wholly brown, the remainder of the same colour with a large white spot in the centre of the inner web; the four middle feathers of the tail similar to the back; the two next on each side tipped with white; the outer ones being pale brown with darker bars and a white tip; throat white slightly speckled with pale brown; sides of the neck and breast greyish white streaked with brown; belly white; bill olive; legs and toes greyish yellow.

We have figured an adult and a young bird in autumn, of the natural size.