

## REDSHANK.

*Totanus calidris*, *Bechst.*

Le Chevalier Gambette.

THIS species of Redshank is not so remarkable for the transitory changes in the colour of its plumage, as is its allied congener the *Totanus fuscus*; for while this last would appear to form another species at different seasons of the year, if change of colour was sufficient, the present bird has the plumage very generally spotted during the seasons of spring and summer, the ground-colour only remaining wholly unchanged. In point of number the Redshank is by far the most common, and is very universally spread over the marshy and low lands of Europe. It is indigenous to the British Isles, and is equally dispersed from Orkney and Shetland to our most southern counties. During the autumn and winter its favourite localities are the edges of the sea and mouths of large rivers, running with great ease and elegance over the flat muddy plains which have been recently left bare by the retiring tide. In the summer it takes to the adjacent marshes, where amid tufts of grass or rushes it constructs a slight inartificial nest, in which it deposits four eggs, rather larger than those of the Snipe, of greenish yellow marked with brown spots which blend together at the larger end. Although the young are soon able to run and provide for themselves, they are not in possession of the power of flight for a considerable period; when disturbed they hide themselves among the herbage with the utmost caution, while the parents may be observed at a distance uttering their querulous and pitiful notes, not unfrequently perched on some neighbouring post or rail, where, with drooping wings and outspread tail, they display the most grotesque and singular appearance.

The sexes offer no difference of plumage, but if compared together may be distinguished by the larger size of the female.

The colour during the spring and breeding season is as follows.—From the eyes to the beak an obscure white mark; the head, back of the neck, top of the back, scapulars and wing-coverts of a greyish olive-brown; on each feather there is a large longitudinal brown mark, except on those of the scapulars and wing-coverts, where there are small black transverse bars; the rump white; the sides of the head, the throat, and all the underparts white, each feather having a longitudinal dash of brownish black which becomes oblique on the abdomen and under tail-coverts; the feathers of the tail are barred with black and white terminating in the latter, the white portion of the four middle ones being tinged with ash colour; the basal half of the beak and the feet are of a bright orange red. As winter comes on these markings become more and more obscure, till at length the back of the neck and the whole of the upper surface are of one uniform ashy brown; the throat, the sides of the head, the fore-part of the neck, and breast, of a greyish white, each feather having the shaft of a dull brown; the rump and underparts of a pure white; the tarsi of a pale reddish orange; irides brown.

Length ten inches.

We have figured adults in the summer and winter plumage.