

Genus HIMANTOPUS, *Briss.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* long, slender, cylindrical, flattened at its base and compressed at the point; both *mandibles* channelled to the extent of half their length from the base. *Nostrils* lateral, linear. *Tarsi* very long and slender. *Toes* three before, the external and middle toes united by a membrane; *nails* small and flat. *Wings* very long, the first *quill-feather* the longest.

LONG-LEGGED PLOVER.

Himantopus melanopterus, *Meyer.*

L'Echasse à manteau noir.

THE genus *Himantopus* although widely distributed, contains, we believe, only two well-authenticated species, —the example here figured, and one very nearly allied to it from North America.

This bird, so singular in its appearance, from the extraordinary length and slenderness of its legs, has been often killed in England; but it must be classed among those birds whose visits are accidental and uncertain. It is equally scarce in Holland and the northern portion of Europe: in fact, though apparently abundant nowhere, it exhibits so wide a range, that its deficiency in point of number in any given locality is counterbalanced by its almost universal distribution. We have been presented with skins which we consider to belong to this same species, from Africa, India, the Islands of the Indian Archipelago, and, if we mistake not, from North and South America.

The Long-legged Plover, as its conformation would lead us to conclude, is a bird whose most congenial habitat is morasses, and the low flat shores of lakes, rivers and seas. Hence in the eastern portions of Europe, where it is said to arrive from Asia in small flocks, it takes up its abode along the lakes and among the vast morasses of Hungary and Russia, where, according to M. Temminck, it rears its progeny, and where it fearlessly wades in search of its food, without much chance of being carried out of its depth; but should such an occurrence happen, or the waves drift it out from the shore, it possesses, like many of the true wading birds, the power of swimming with the greatest ease and lightness; in fact, in whatever point of view we consider the Long-legged Plover, we find it adapted in the best possible manner for its habits and modes of life: few birds exceed it in the powers of flight; its wings far exceed the tail, and it passes through the air with astonishing rapidity. When on firm ground, it appears as if tottering on long and awkward stilts: but firm ground is not its congenial habitat. The egg as figured by Dr. Thienemann measures one inch nine lines in length by one inch three lines in breadth, of a pale blueish green, spotted and specked with dark brown.

In the male, the top of the head, face and under parts are white with a faint tinge of rose-colour; back of the head and neck black; back and wings black with green reflections; tail light grey; beak black; irides crimson; tarsi and feet fine orange-red. In some stages of plumage the head and neck are perfectly white, the black being, in all probability, the plumage of summer.

The female differs from the male in having the back brown instead of black, with green reflections.

The young have their colours altogether more obscure, with a brown tinge; the tarsi and irides are also less brilliant.

We have figured a male in perfect plumage, nearly of the natural size.