

ARDETTA PUSILLA.

Minute Bittern.

Ardea pusilla, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xiv. p. 432.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., part iii. p. 1128.—Wagl. Syst. Av. Ardea, sp. 44.

— *maculata*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. lxiv.—Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xiv. p. 432.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., part iii. p. 1128, young?

Spotted Heron, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 305.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. ix. p. 73, young?

SPECIMENS of the Minute Bittern are contained in my own collection, and in that of the Linnean Society of London; it is however a very rare species, and at present nothing whatever is known respecting it. During my sojourn in the country I ascertained that the few individuals known had been procured between Sydney and Botany Bay. I have frequently had occasion to allude to the beautiful manner in which many birds peculiar to Europe are represented in Australia by other closely allied species, and the present bird forms another case in point, since it is clearly a representative of the Little Bittern (*Ardetta minuta*) of this part of the world, which it much resembles in the style of its plumage, but is of a still smaller size. This is another of the species, therefore, to which I would direct the attention of residents in its native country, with a view to their making known the result of their observations for the promotion of ornithological science.

The sexes, as is the case with the *Ardetta minuta* of Europe, differ considerably from each other, the female being mottled and of a smaller size than her mate.

The male has the crown of the head, back and tail bronzy greenish black; front of the neck buff, gradually passing into rich deep chestnut on the sides of the head and back of the neck; down the centre of the chin and neck in front a broad irregular stripe of reddish brown; on either side of the chest a patch of black feathers margined with deep buff; all the under surface pale buff; wing-coverts deep buff, with a patch of rich chestnut on the shoulder and a wash of the same colour along the edge of the wing; primaries slaty black; space round the eye, bill and feet yellow; culmen nearly black; irides orange.

The female has the head and back chestnut; wing-coverts very deep tawny, passing into chestnut on the tips of the coverts and secondaries; primaries grey, tipped with brown; tail black; sides of the neck pale chestnut; front of the throat and the under surface white, with a stripe of tawny down the middle, and a small streak of brown in the centre of each feather, the brown hue predominating and forming a conspicuous mark down the throat.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the size of life.