

ACTITIS EMPUSA, *Gould.*

Fairy Sandpiper.

Actitis empusa, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., November 23, 1847.

Green Sandpiper, Colonists of Port Essington.

THIS species, which is much smaller than the *Actitis hypoleucos* of Europe, and differs moreover in having the brown of the upper surface washed with translucent bronze, is very thinly dispersed over the Australian continent. Although I have seen specimens from every colony, with the exception of that on the north coast, I am unable to say in which it is most plentiful, or in which it may be sought for at any given period with the certainty of finding it. I did not meet with it myself in any of my various wanderings, but Mr. Gilbert observed it both at Swan River and at Port Essington. When speaking of Swan River, he says, "I only saw this species once. When near the entrance of the Swan, I noticed it flitting from rock to rock, and every time it rested on its feet the tail was constantly moved up and down with a shaking motion." On referring to the Port Essington specimens, he remarks, "Although solitary in its habits, I have seen three or four together; they were mostly observed inhabiting the beds of mangroves, over the roots of which, just above the water, they were very actively engaged in searching for their food, the tail being in constant motion: occasionally I saw solitary individuals on the margins of the lakes inland."

The food consists of aquatic insects and very small shelled mollusks.

The sexes are precisely alike in the colour of their plumage, and but little difference exists in their size; the young on the contrary, which are met with in greater abundance than the adults, have the brown feathers of the upper surface, barred or freckled with darker brown.

The adults have all the upper surface pale glossy or bronzy brown, each feather crossed with irregular bars of dark brown, bounded on either side by a narrow line of pale brown; base and tips of the secondaries white; primaries very slightly tipped with white; centre tail feathers pale glossy or bronzy brown, with a row of irregular-shaped spots of dark brown along the margins; lateral feathers white, crossed by irregular blended bars of dark and pale brown; under surface white, with the exception of the sides of the chest, and the shafts of the feathers of the front of the chest, which are pale brown.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the natural size.