

GLAREOLA GRALLARIA, Temm.

Australian Pratincole.

Glareola grallaria, Temm. Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 503.

——— *Isabella*, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. ii. p. 159. pl. 263.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 541.—Ib. Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 290.—Vieill. 2^{de} Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xiii. p. 221.—Bonn. et Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., part iii. p. 1048.

——— *Australis*, Leach in Linn. Trans., vol. xiii. p. 132. pl. 14. fig. 1, 2.

Australasian Pratincole, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ix. p. 366.

THIS species of Pratincole possesses several remarkable specific distinctions, among which, as will be seen on reference to the figures in the accompanying Plate, are the great length of the tarsi and primaries, which, combined with the graceful contour of its body and the small size of its head, render it the most elegant species of the genus that has yet been discovered. The figure in Vieillot's "Galérie des Oiseaux" is far less accurate than the description. The bird is there portrayed with the primaries brown, whereas they should be black; the white of the throat is also much less defined in the bird than it is in the drawing; this mark, which is so conspicuous in the other members of the genus, being scarcely distinguishable in the present species from the surrounding reddish buff colouring of the head and neck.

While traversing the plains bordering the River Namoi in New South Wales, I once had a transient view of this interesting bird: it was on the wing, and so rapid and extended was its flight, and so close did it keep to the ground, that I had scarcely satisfied myself as to what kind of bird it was, before it was lost in the distant horizon. I possess however two specimens, both of which were collected within three hundred miles of the locality above-mentioned; and forming, as they did, part of a collection made in the Moreton Bay district, the eastern portion of the continent of Australia may be regarded as one of the localities in which it is found, but which, from its rare occurrence therein, can scarcely be considered its natural habitat: in all probability the vast interior of the country is its native home.

I have not been able to satisfy myself as to whether the birds whose wings and colouring resemble those of the middle figure in the Plate are adult females or immature males.

We may reasonably suppose that nature has destined this bird to the same offices in Australia that are performed by the *Glareola pratincola* in Europe, that insects of various kinds constitute its sole food, and that they are taken both on the wing and on the ground, as the great development of its wings and legs must give it peculiar facility for capturing them; future discovery, however, must determine this among numerous other points now unknown respecting the economy of the birds of that distant and comparatively unknown country, Australia.

The male has the head, all the upper surface, wings and breast light rufous, becoming nearly white on the throat; lores dark brown; primaries and under surface of the wing black; shaft of the outer primary white for three-fourths of its length from the base; abdomen rich chestnut; thighs, upper and under tail-coverts white; central tail-feathers black, tipped on their outer webs with brown and on their inner webs with white; lateral tail-feathers white, with an oval spot of brown near the tip of the inner web; the next on each side white, crossed by a band, the inner portion of which is black and the outer brown; bill red at the base, black at the tip; legs and feet brown.

The female or young male has all the upper surface light reddish brown; the feathers of the breast with a spot of brown in the centre; the band across the abdomen pale chestnut; in other respects the colouring is similar to the male.

The figures are of the natural size.