

## HIATICULA NIGRIFRONS.

### Black-fronted Dottrel.

*Charadrius nigrifrons*, Cuv. in Mus. Paris.—Temm. Pl. Col., 47. fig. 1.—Wagl. Syst. Av., sp. 20.

———— *melanops*, Vieill., Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxvii. p. 139.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., Part I. p. 335. pl. 233. fig. 3.

*Ægialitis nigrifrons*, Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part II.

*Hiaticula nigrifrons*, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., Part III. p. 71.

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THE temperate latitudes of Australia constitute the true habitat of this beautiful little Dottrel; for so far as I have been able to learn, it is never found in the northern part of that country, nor can Van Diemen's Land claim it as a part of its fauna; the climate of the latter country being less genial, and the seas which wash its shores being too rough and boisterous for the abode of so delicate a bird as the *Hiaticula nigrifrons*. Even in Australia the exposed sea-beaches seem to be avoided, and it is most frequently found in the interior of the country, on the margins of pools and lakes, and in the most retired situations. It also frequents the sides of rivers running into the heart of the country; I frequently encountered it while descending the Namoi, on the lowest part of which river I was so fortunate as to discover its eggs. They were deposited on the ground beside the stream; they now grace my cabinet, and are esteemed as one of my greatest rarities, and to which many pleasing associations are attached, connected with my visit to the distant region in which they were procured.

The colonies of Swan River, South Australia and New South Wales are equally visited by this bird; and its range appears to be general over those portions of Australia lying between the twenty-eighth and thirty-seventh degrees of south latitude.

No member of the genus is more tame than the present; for as it trips nimbly along the sides of the pools it will allow of a sufficiently near approach for the observer to see the colour of the eye, and the brilliant ring of scarlet which encircles it; and when forced to take wing it merely flies to the opposite bank or to a very short distance, and then alights again.

The two eggs above-mentioned so nearly resembled the surface of the sand-bank upon which they were deposited, that it was by the merest chance they were not passed by unnoticed. In form they nearly resemble the eggs of other Dottrels, being considerably pointed at the smaller end; they are one inch and three-sixteenths long by three-quarters of an inch broad; of a pale stone or dirty white colour, very numerous but minutely speckled with dark brown.

The sexes are precisely alike in the colouring of their plumage, and nearly so in size.

Forehead, a stripe commencing at the eye passing over the ear-coverts and round the back of the neck, and a broad band crossing the chest and advancing somewhat down the centre of the breast, black; a stripe of white passes over each eye and continues round the back of the neck, separating the black band from the crown, which with the back, the long tertials, and the middle of the wing, are brown; scapularies deep chestnut; tips of the greater coverts white, forming an obscure band across the wing; primaries black; throat, abdomen and under tail-coverts white; two middle tail-feathers brown at the base and black at the tip; the next three on each side white at the base, gradually passing into blackish brown, and largely tipped with white, the remainder entirely white; bill rich orange at the base and black at the tip; feet orange flesh-colour in some, in others pale flesh-colour; irides dark brown; eyelash bright red.

The young have a crescentic mark of a lighter colour on the feathers of the upper surface, and have the colouring of the plumage and soft parts less brilliant and well-defined than the adults.

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