

HIATICULA RUFICAPILLA.

Red-capped Dottrel.

Charadrius ruficapillus, Temm. Pl. Col., 47. fig. 2.—Wagl. Syst. Avium, Sp. 33.

——— *marginatus*, Geoff. in Mus. Paris.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 544.—Ib. Man. d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 318.—Bonn. et Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., part i. p. 335.—Vieill. 2nde Edit. du Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxvii. p. 138.

Hiaticula ruficapilla, List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 71.

Sand-Lark and *Red-necked Plover*, Colonists of Swan River.

THE Red-capped Dottrel is universally dispersed over every part of the sea-shores of Australia that I have visited, and everywhere evinces a greater preference for the shingly beach of the ocean, and especially for deep salt-water bays, than for the sides of rivers and inland waters; it is very numerous in Van Diemen's Land, on Flinders' Island, on the sand-banks at the mouth of the Hunter in New South Wales and at Port Adelaide in South Australia; and Mr. Gilbert states that it is equally abundant in Western Australia, where it is likewise so strictly a bird of the coast that he never saw it inland. It is usually met with in pairs, but may be occasionally observed associating in small companies.

I found many of its eggs on Flinders' Island, deposited in pairs in a slight depression of the sand among the shingle just above high-water mark; they were very difficult to detect, in consequence of their colouring very closely assimilating to that of the material among which they were placed; those procured by Mr. Gilbert in Western Australia were deposited on a small mound of sand and sea-weed on the sandy beach at a distance of from ten to twenty yards above high-water mark. The breeding-season comprises September and the three or four following months.

The stomach is very muscular, and the food consists of small mollusca of various kinds.

Like the *Tringa* generally, this bird resorts to every possible device in order to lure an intruder from its nest: throwing itself down upon its chest and flapping its wings as if in the last agonies of death, it will so continue until he has approached almost near enough to place his hand upon it, when it moves along for several yards, dragging one of its legs behind it as if it were broken, and if still followed up attempts to fly, and so well imitates the motions of a bird wounded in the wing, that the intruder is easily misled, and the eggs remain undiscovered.

The eggs, which are an inch and a quarter in length by seven-eighths of an inch in breadth, are of a pale stone-colour, sprinkled all over with small irregular blotches of brownish black.

The male has the forehead crossed by a broad band of white, which gradually diminishes to a point at the posterior angle of the eye; above this is another band of black, which also diminishes to a point at the same place; from the angle of the mouth to the eye is a line of black, which is continued from the posterior angle of the eye in an indistinct form down the sides of the neck; crown of the head, nape and back of the neck rich rusty red; all the upper surface and wings pale brown, each feather margined with a still lighter tint; primaries blackish brown; the shafts and extreme edge of the inner webs white; four central tail-feathers dark brown, the remainder white; all the under surface white; irides very dark brown; bill dark reddish brown; naked part of the legs above the tarsi dark greenish grey; tarsi light grey; feet blackish brown.

In the female the distribution of colour is precisely the same, but the hues are all much paler, and the marks about the face are light brown instead of black.

The Plate represents the two sexes of the natural size.