

HIATICULA BICINCTA.

Double-banded Dottrel.

Charadrius bicinctus, Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. i. pl. 28.

Chestnut-breasted Plover, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ix. p. 324.

Ægialitis bicinctus, Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part II.

My friend Ronald C. Gunn, Esq., informs me that he has found this fine species plentifully dispersed along the northern shores of Van Diemen's Land, particularly at Circular Head and its neighbourhood. I never but once encountered it in a state of nature myself, and judging from the unfrequency of its occurrence in collections from Australia, its true habitat would seem to be but seldom visited. During my stay at George Town, flocks of considerable numbers visited the common in the vicinity, and appeared to be acting under some migratory impulse, for after remaining a day or two they departed to some other part of the country; not, however, before I had procured as many specimens as I required. This occurred about the 15th of May, the middle of the Australian winter. These flights consisted of birds of various ages and in different states of plumage, some having mere indications only of the bands on the breast, while others had these marks well defined, but none so strongly as in the principal figure in the accompanying Plate, which appears to be the full summer or breeding plumage. The circumstance of their assembling in large flocks, and evincing a partiality to the green sward rather than to the shingly beach, leads me to assign to this bird a different habit from the more typical members of the genus, and the dark colour and greater length of its tarsi and bill show an approach to the more typical Plovers. It would not surprise me if it should prove, that instead of breeding on the sandy shores, this species resorts for that purpose to inland districts; a point it would be most interesting to ascertain, and to which I beg to direct the attention of the highly esteemed friend to whom I have alluded above. Of the numerous specimens I killed at George Town, no two were alike; consequently I am uncertain whether the sexes when adult are similarly marked or not, but judging from other species I presume they are.

The Double-banded Dottrel runs over the ground with great swiftness; all in the flock take flight together, and mount high in the air, which they pass through very quickly, suddenly wheel about, and after flying a mile or two return, and pitch again within a hundred yards of the spot from whence they had arisen.

In the adult state a broad stripe of white crosses the forehead, above which the feathers are black, which colour gradually passes into the uniform pale brown which covers the whole of the upper surface; outer webs of the primaries blackish brown; inner webs paler; throat white, surrounded with a narrow line of black, which commences above the upper mandible and continues down the sides of the neck and forms a broad band across the breast; across and down the centre of the abdomen a broad band of bright chestnut; the rest of the under surface pure white; two centre tail-feathers greyish brown, those on each side paler, and the exterior ones white; irides blackish brown; eyelash scarlet; bill black, slightly tinged with olive; feet pale sickly yellowish white; joints of the knees and toes browner.

The Plate represents an adult male and a female, and an immature bird of the natural size.