NUMENIUS RUFESCENS, Gould.

Rufescent Curlew.

Numenius rufescens, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1862, p. 286.—Swinh. in Ibis, 1863, p. 410.

When the ornithologist meets with a species presenting such marked differences from its allies as those which exist in the present bird, he has no alternative but to assign to it a specific appellation. In size and general contour, the *Numenius rufescens* is very similar to our well-known Curlew *N. arquatus*, but is still more nearly allied to the *N. australis*; from the former it is distinguished by the spotting of its rump-feathers, and from the latter and every other known species of the genus by its rufous colouring. In the entire course of my ornithological studies, I have never seen any other bird of this form similarly coloured, or so strongly streaked on the rump; and I have much pleasure in including a figure of this new and singular species in the 'Birds of Asia.'

The following interesting notes respecting it are from the pen of Mr. Swinhoe:—

"The single specimen I procured of this very rufescent Curlew was shot on the sand-flat that divides the Tamsuy River near its mouth. It had for some days been observed, in company with its mate, passing to and returning from its feeding-ground; and my attention was drawn to it by the peculiar character of its long-drawn cry, being very different from that of the large species which visits those shores during the winter, and resembling the melancholy whistle of the Grey Plover. On dissection, this bird proved to be a female, with large, well-developed eggs in the oviduct, evidently within a few days of maturity, proving that its nesting-site could not have been far distant. From the developed state of the eggs and the late season of the year, I have little doubt of its being a resident species. It differs from the Numenius major of Japan, but agrees with N. australis of Australia (of which latter I procured examples on the Peiho flats, near Peking), in having a striated rump; but it is much more rufescent than that bird, and we cannot do otherwise than regard it as a well-defined species, closely allied to the Australian Curlew. If it be a good species (and I am inclined to think it is), it strikes me as rather strange that two species of true Numenius should be indigenous to the same semitropical island,—the smaller species, or Whimbrel, ranging over the southern portion, and the present species over the northern. On comparing my bird with a specimen of N. australis in Mr. Gould's collection, I observe that it has much thinner and fewer black streaks on the neck and breast."

Head, neck, upper and under surface reddish fawn-colour, deepest and most conspicuous on the rump and tail-feathers; down the centre of each feather a streak of blackish brown, broadest and most conspicuous on the back, rump, and upper tail-coverts; primaries blackish brown, strongly toothed on their inner margins with greyish white; tail-feathers irregularly crossed with blackish brown; thighs light buff; "bill blackish olive, tinted with flesh-colour, darker on the apical half; basal half of the lower mandible light flesh-colour, tinged with ochre; inside of the mouth flesh-colour; skin round the eye blackish brown; irides deep chocolate-brown; legs leaden grey, becoming black on the joints, webs, and sides of the toes; claws blackish brown, with ochreous edges." (Swinhoe.)

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The figure is rather less than the natural size.