

As yet I have only spoken of the Jack Snipe as an inhabitant of Britain and the northern countries of Europe. I may now state that it is also found in Asia Minor, Persia, and India, from one end of the peninsula to the other; but Schrenck did not meet with it on the Amoor, nor Mr. Swinhoe in China.

In specimens from all these localities, distant though they be, no visible difference occurs in the plumage. A Jack Snipe from India is the veritable bird of our own island.

The only certain information we have respecting the breeding of this species is that which was supplied to the last edition of Mr. Hewitson's work by the late Mr. John Wolley. The following is an extract from the account he gives:—

“It was on the 17th of June, 1853, in the great marsh of Muonioniska, that I first heard the Jack-Snipe, though at the time I could not at all guess what it was—an extraordinary sound, unlike anything I had heard before; I could not tell from what direction it came, and it filled me with curious surprise: my Finnish interpreter thought it was a Capercally, and at that time I could not contradict him; but I soon found that it was a small bird gliding at a wild pace, and at a great height over the marsh. I know not how better to describe the noise than by likening it to the cantering of a horse in the distance over a hard hollow road; it came in fours, with a similar cadence, and a like clear yet hollow sound. The same day we found a nest which seemed to be of a kind unknown to me. The next morning I went to Kharto Uoma with a number of beaters; I kept them, as well as I could, in line, myself in the middle, my Swedish travelling companion on one side and the Finn talker on the other. Whenever a bird was put off its eggs, the man who saw it was to pass on the word, and the whole line was to stand while I went to examine the eggs and take them at once, or observe the bearings of the spot for another visit, as might be necessary. We had not been many hours in the marsh before I saw a bird get up, and marked it down. The nest was found. A sight of the eggs, as they lay untouched, raised my expectations to the highest pitch. I went to the spot where I had marked the bird, put it up again, and again saw it, after a short low flight, drop suddenly into cover. I fired, and in a minute had in my hand a true Jack Snipe, the undoubted parent of the nest of eggs! In the course of the day and night, I found three more nests, and examined the birds of each. One allowed me to touch it with my hand before it rose, and another only got up when my foot was within 6 inches of it. It was very fortunate that I was enabled to identify so fine a series of eggs, for they differ considerably from one another. I was never afterwards able to see a nest myself, though I beat through numbers of swamps; several with eggs, mostly hard sat upon, were found by people cutting hay in boggy places in July. The nest of the 17th, and the four of the 18th of June, were all alike in structure, made loosely of little pieces of grass and *Equisetum*, not at all woven together, with a few old leaves of the dwarf birch, placed in a dry sedgy or grassy spot close to a more open swamp.”

To this Mr. Hewitson adds, “were not the eggs verified beyond a doubt, no one would credit that a bird of dimensions not much larger than a Skylark could produce them, or, having produced them, could keep them warm. They are precisely of the same length as those of the Common Snipe, but are not so wide at the broadest part. The bird weighs about two ounces; the four eggs more than an ounce and a half: thus the eggs of the Jack Snipe weigh nearly as much as the bird itself.”

All this has reference to that tract of Central Lapland which was so laboriously explored by Mr. Wolley. Further to the south and west the Jack Snipe does not seem to breed; at least Mr. Wheelwright never met with it in the neighbourhood of Quickiock: but in an easterly direction it is probable that its summer range may be much more extended; and it has been asserted to breed near St. Petersburg. Middendorf met with it on the Boganida, first noticing its arrival towards the end of June.

Mr. Alfred Newton tells me that the eggs of this species, of which he possesses a large series, are subject to very great variations both in size and colouring. Some are hardly to be distinguished from those of the Common Snipe, whilst others again greatly resemble those of the Broad-billed Sandpiper. The same gentleman has also submitted to me some sketches of the nestling birds, which he executed during his stay at Muonioniska. They differ considerably from the young of the Common Snipe, being of a very much richer brown colour, but mottled with lighter tints and white after a somewhat similar fashion.

As it is always of interest to quote any notes respecting our birds as seen in India, I annex the following remarks on this species from Mr. Jerdon's Birds of that country:—“The Jack Snipe is generally diffused throughout India, preferring thicker coverts than the Common Snipe, lying very close, and difficult to find. Now and then considerable numbers will be met with; in other places it is rarely seen. It makes its appearance later than the Common Snipe, and departs earlier, breeding in the northern parts of Europe and Asia.”

The figures are of the natural size. The elegant little white-flowered bog-plant is the *Parnassia palustris*.