

very similar to those of the ordinary-sized Common Snipe, but the plumage was altogether of a more ruddy cast, and the light stripes on the scapularies were narrower and much less conspicuous. The bill and the tarsi especially appear very short when compared with the large size of the body. All sportsmen who have killed the bird remark that it rises without noise."

If these birds should ultimately prove to belong to a distinct species, I would propose for it the scientific appellation of *Gallinago russata*, and the trivial one of Russet Snipe, in allusion to its rufous colouring.

To add my mite of recommendation of the Snipe as a bird for the table would be superfluous, since it is very generally agreed that it is second to none of our British birds in this respect. As an object of sport, no bird is more highly esteemed; for where is the sportsman who would not walk a great distance for a chance shot at a Snipe?

I have mentioned above that the Snipe is a resident species; by this I mean that it breeds with us. It will be necessary, however, to enumerate some of the places, and the character of the localities, which it frequents; and this may be done in a few words. In every swampy situation covered with rushes and rank herbage, on Dartmoor, Exmoor, in the New Forest, the edges of Frencham and other ponds on the great commons near Farnham in Surrey, Bagshot Heath, and all suitable localities in Derbyshire and Wales, a hundred places in the north of England, and every part of Scotland and Ireland, if sufficiently quiet and undisturbed, this bird may be heard bleating in the month of March. In April the female engaged in incubating her four large eggs, may be found; and by the end of the month the young are hatched. The figures of the young in the accompanying Plate were drawn from specimens sent to me alive by Sir John H. Crewe, from one of his estates in Derbyshire, and were forwarded with so much care that they reached London in safety; by this means I was enabled to give a correct representation of them, which I could not otherwise have done, for these delicate little creatures begin to decompose from the moment of their death. Besides the young, Sir John Crewe's head keeper, Mr. W. Turner, sent me the parent birds also alive; and the accompanying illustration may therefore be considered as complete as any I have yet published. I was very much puzzled by the peculiar grey colouring which pervaded the throat and sides of the face of these breeding birds. Thinking this might be due to some extraneous cause, such as a peculiarity in the soil or water of the neighbourhood where the bird had been incubating, I wrote to Mr. Turner on the subject. In reply he says, "I observe that a marked difference in the colouring of the Snipe takes place soon after they begin to breed. The bright colours about the head and under the throat, with which it is decorated in winter, give place in summer to a dirty ash-colour. I do not think it is due to the birds feeding on peat land; for we have many which breed where there is no peat, and I observe that all present the same appearance at this season of the year." This is not in accordance with my own observations, for I have not seen them thus coloured from any other locality. The young, as will be seen by my figures, are as rich in their colours as they are fantastical in their markings; even in this downy and youthful state, the young Snipes sprawl about among the herbage with considerable activity. It will also be seen that the nest is a very slight affair, composed of grasses, delicate shreds of rushes, &c., placed in a small tuft of grass in the middle of a swamp.

A considerable controversy has been carried on respecting the manner in which the "bleating" of the Snipe is produced, some persons being of opinion that it is due to the resistance offered to the air by the stiff and curved outer feather of the tail while the bird is rapidly descending; but this has not been very satisfactorily ascertained. On this part of the bird's economy I extract the following note from an interesting little volume by the Rev. J. C. Atkinson, entitled 'British Birds' Eggs and Nests.' Speaking of the Snipe, this gentleman says:—"It is a bird, moreover, which is quite sure to make it very distinctly known that it has a nest and eggs somewhere near, if any human visitor appears on the scene. I refer to the very peculiar note or sound emitted by the male, always while he is on the wing high in the air, and always accompanied with a very remarkable action of his wings and curving descent in his flight. This sound or note (for it is not absolutely certain, I think, how it is produced) is variously called humming, bleating, drumming, buzzing. To me, the first time I heard it, and before I knew to what origin to assign it, the impression produced was precisely that of a large bee, entangled in some particular place and unable to extricate itself; and I remember spending some minutes in trying to discover the supposed insect. The eggs are usually four, placed in a very slight and inartificial nest on the ground near some tuft of rushes or other water-herbage. They are of a greenish-olive hue, blotched and spotted with two or three shades of brown, the deepest being very dark. The old ones are said to be very jealous and careful of their young."

The Plate represents a male, a female, four young birds, and a nest, all of the natural size.