

GALLINAGO SCOLOPACINA.

Common Snipe.

Scolopax Gallinago, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 244.

—— *uniclavatus*, Hodgs. Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., 1837, p. 492.

—— *Sabini*, Vig. in Linn. Trans., vol. xiv. p. 556, pl. 31.

—— (*Ascalopax*) *Gallinago*, Schrenck, Reis. und Forsch. im Amurlande, Band i. p. 421.

Gallinago media, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 54; Gray and Mitch. Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 583, *Gallinago*, sp. 2.

—— *scolopacinus*, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List of the Birds of Eur. and N. Am., p. 52.

—— *Brehmii*, Kaup.

Telmatias gallinago, Blas. List of Birds of Eur., Engl. edit., p. 19.

So much has been written respecting the habits and economy of this highly esteemed bird, that to say anything new on these points would be almost impossible. Mr. Selby must ever take the first rank among living writers on those of our native birds which are of especial interest to sportsmen; and accordingly much information with regard to this species may be found in his 'British Ornithology.' Thompson and Macgillivray have also both left behind them abundant notes relative to it. My own remarks will take a wider field; for I shall give some account of the range of the bird in other countries, and of the varieties which occasionally occur. Although the Snipe is strictly an indigenous bird, vast accessions to those bred in England and Ireland annually occur—great flights arriving from Norway and Sweden in the month of November, and spreading themselves over every part of the British Islands, from north to south and from east to west. In Ireland, owing to the greater amount of boggy and undrained land, the bird is even more abundant than in England. It is an inhabitant of all parts of Europe, Iceland, Greenland, a great part of Africa, the whole of Asia Minor, western and northern India, China and Japan: it is enumerated in the list of the birds of the Amoor, and it is doubtless spread over the whole of Siberia.

The *Gallinago Brehmii* of Kaup must, I think, rank as a synonym of our bird, since the principal difference consists in an elongation of the outer tail-feathers, which I believe to be characteristic of one or other of the old birds in the breeding-season; and the *Scolopax Sabini* of Vigors should be placed in the same category; for, notwithstanding the dark colouring of the specimens to which that name has been applied, and the difference in some of their markings, ornithologists now consider them to be merely a black variety; still this extraordinary departure from the normal colouring of the plumage is very puzzling, and specimens in this state must always be regarded with interest: the last example which occurred in England was shot by Brydges Willyams, Esq., of Nan's Kavel in Cornwall, in 1861, and is now in the possession of that gentleman.

Every ornithologist must have experienced great difficulty in finding good specific characters for the various members of this group of birds, some of the foreign species being most closely allied; this difficulty, however, does not exist with regard to the three which inhabit England, for no birds can be more different. A Snipe, however, is every now and then found in our markets, which on comparison with the *Gallinago scolopacina* is found to differ, being redder in colour and weighing six ounces. So far as I am aware, this bird has not yet received a specific name; and, after all, it may be only a variety; still it is a matter which requires close attention. Mr. Rodd says, in the 'Zoologist,' p. 4704, "For some years past I have occasionally met with a Snipe in this neighbourhood, which I strongly suspect to be distinct from the common one, and not hitherto described. I think the first was in 1834. Some five or six examples have since come under my notice; and I may remark that the size of the new bird is longer and more bulky than the Common Snipe. The whole of the tints of the upper plumage, both as to the rufous and buff markings, are darker, and the dorsal stripes are much narrower, and appear altogether more obscure than in the *Scolopax scolopacinus*. There is also more rufous about the head and shoulders, and the under parts are more darkly clouded, with the flanks much more striated, and the belly less silvery white. All the specimens that I have seen correspond with each other; they all appear larger than the Common Snipe, but, like that bird, have fourteen tail-feathers. Mr. Vingoe has been looking out for specimens during this hard winter (1854-55), and succeeded in shooting one, which, he says, rose without any noise, and without any companions." "I have lately examined," says Mr. Gatcombe ('Zoologist,' p. 7938), "two examples of the large brown variety of Snipe, so accurately described by Mr. Rodd. One of these, killed at Dartmoor, in December last (1861), quite equalled in size some specimens of *S. major*, but differed from that species in having the belly white, and only fourteen feathers in the tail. The general markings were