

over some swampy ground covered with birchwood and dwarf willow on the edge of the marsh, our attention was attracted by an unknown note of a bird on the ground, somewhat resembling the smack of the tongue repeated several times in succession. On remaining still for a few seconds, we saw several Great Snipes walking about and feeding within a few yards of us: we watched them for some time, but they did not appear to take the smallest notice of us.

“About the 10th of June we began to search for their nests, but did not succeed in finding any until the 24th, nearly a month after the arrival of the birds. The first nest we found contained four eggs, and was placed on the edge of a small hillock, quite open, though there were birch-trees growing all round, and one on the hillock on which the nest was situated. It consisted of nothing more than a hole scraped in the moss, in which the eggs were deposited; there was neither grass nor leaves in it. The next day (June 25th) we found another nest, within 200 yards of the former, containing only two eggs. It was situated on a small hillock, in much the same sort of place as the former. We found another nest on the 27th. The bird fluttered off and ran away, dragging its wings on the ground, and making a sort of drumming noise. After taking four eggs from this nest, we went to look at that found on the 25th, containing two eggs, and were surprised at seeing nothing in its place but some apparently disturbed moss. Our first impression was that the eggs had been destroyed by the Magpies or Crows that were constantly hunting for such food, or perhaps taken and eaten by the many boys who wander about the marsh tending cattle; but on beginning to express our fears, the bird, doubtless frightened by our voices, flew up, leaving a hole in the moss through which we could see there were only two eggs as before. Not doubting that the bird would yet lay more, we again left it, and, on returning to the spot in a couple of days, observed the nest was again covered with moss. This time we remained for a minute before the bird flew off; and on stooping down to examine it more closely, we could distinctly see the bird's back through the moss. The bird had evidently, after it was comfortably seated in its nest, torn up with its long beak the moss that was within its reach, and drawn it over its back till it was completely covered: there was not the least appearance of any hole through which the bird could have crept into its nest. This circumstance of the nest being covered is the more curious, as, out of six found, it was the only one thus carefully concealed. There were as many as ten or fifteen pairs of these birds in the marsh, which usually kept pretty close together, and were generally to be found in one particular spot. Could this have been a congregation of male birds, the mates of which were breeding in the vicinity? We saw the bird occasionally on swamps in the mountains; but it would have been a hopeless task to have searched for its nest there, though we have little doubt it breeds in other localities in the neighbourhood.” (Ibis, vol. iii. p. 87.)

The artifice above described is very singular, particularly as it tends to confirm an anecdote told to me by a gentleman upon whose veracity I can rely, to the effect that he had noticed a similar propensity in the Woodcock. We know that all the Grebes cover their eggs to hide them from observation, and there can be but little doubt that the Titlark crosses her nest with grasses for the same purpose; some birds place upright feathers at the entrance of their dome-shaped nests; and the Brambling often sits with two or three feathers curling over her back, as I myself observed on the Doverfeld in Norway.

Mr. Dann informed Mr. Yarrell that during the pairing-season the Great Snipe flies to a vast height, and, as it descends, makes a drumming noise by means of a slight and peculiar vibration of the wings. Mr. Selby and others have remarked that it utters no cry when flushed. Mr. Hoy informed Mr. Hewitson that “there is no doubt that by far the greater number of the Great Snipe retire to the swamps of the north to breed; still a considerable number are spread over the fens and morasses of Holland. The Great Snipe very much resembles the Jack Snipe in its habits, lying close, and, when disturbed, rarely flying far. The eggs are four in number, of a yellowish olive-brown, spotted with two tints of reddish brown, and are one inch and nine lines in length by one inch and two lines in breadth.”

The young in the downy state, or when about two or three days old, have the colouring of the head and face similar to but more buffy than in the adult, the line down the centre of the head absent, the upper surface mottled with buff chestnut and black, the under surface buff on the breast and flanks and greyish in the middle of the abdomen, and some undefined black marks on the throat. At this age they differ from the young of *G. scolopacinus* in being very much lighter coloured, and in exhibiting none of the rich chestnut tints so conspicuous in that bird.

The Plate represents the male of the natural size, and the female nearly concealed by the moss and herbage which she has thrown over her back.