

## MACRORHAMPHUS GRISEUS.

### Red-breasted or Brown Snipe.

*Scolopax grisea*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 658 (1788).

——— *noveboracensis*, Gmel. ibid., tom. i. p. 658.

——— *Paykullii*, Nilss. Orn. Suec., tom. ii. p. 106.

*Totanus noveboracensis*, Sab. in Frankl. Journ. App., p. 687.

*Macrorhamphus griseus*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 31 (1816).

*Scolopax leucophæa*, Vieillot, Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. iii. p. 358 (nec Latham).

MR. HARTING has favoured me with the following communication respecting the Red-breasted or Brown Snipe :—" At least fifteen instances have been recorded of the occurrence of this bird in Great Britain (for particulars see my 'Handbook of British Birds,' p. 144). Of these, ten specimens were killed in autumn, when scarcely any trace could be seen of the beautiful rufous colouring which marks the breeding-plumage." Some of these occurrences are indicated by Mr. Harting in the following order :—One, Devonshire, 1801, Mont. Orn. Dict.; one, Devonshire, Moore, Mag. Nat. Hist. 1837, p. 320; one, near Carlisle, 25th Sept. 1835; one, Yarmouth, autumn, 1836, Stevenson's 'Birds of Norfolk,' vol. ii. p. 348; one, Yarmouth, Oct. 1841, in the collection of Mr. J. H. Gurney; one, Hornsey, Norfolk, Oct. 9th, 1845; one, Point of Ayr, Isle of Man, 1847, Zoologist, 1856, p. 5251; one, on the Thames near Battersea, Harting, 'Birds of Middlesex,' in the collection of F. Bond, Esq.; one, Scilly, Oct. 1857, Rodd, Zoologist, 1857; one, Kingsbridge, Devon, 1857; one, sands near Banff, Sept. 1858; one, on the Brent, Middlesex, Oct. 1862, in Mr. Harting's collection; one, Dumbarrie Links, Sept. 1867, Gray's 'Birds of Western Scotland,' p. 314; and one on the Clyde, R. Gray, Ibis, 1870, p. 292. Thus it will be seen that individuals of the *Macrorhamphus griseus* have been seen and shot in various parts of our islands from the days of Montagu to the present period; and doubtless, as time rolls on, similar visits will be repeated. Still all such individuals must be regarded as mere casual visitors which have probably been blown out of their course during their autumnal migrations in their native country, America.

From the commencement of the present work it has been a question with me how far we are justified in calling such American wanderers British Birds; and I should not have included them had I not been aware that I should be censured for not doing so by many of my subscribers, who consider that any of those that have appeared in such popular works as those of Selby, Yarrell, &c. should have a place in the present publication; and it is a deference to their opinion which must plead my excuse for figuring many birds from foreign countries which have merely paid solitary visits to our shores.

Perhaps in the whole range of ornithology there is not a more singular form than the present bird. Structurally it is closely allied to the true Snipes, while in its colouring and in the seasonal changes of plumage to which it is subject it is as nearly related to the Sandpiper. As might naturally be expected, its habits and economy are intermediate, resembling those of both groups, as the following notes, principally taken from transatlantic authors who have the bird constantly before them, will show.

First, however, let me speak of the range of this species. The Red-breasted Snipe may be said to inhabit the whole of North America, summering and breeding as far as the Arctic circle, and returning south at the opposite season to Texas, Mexico, and even to the Pacific coasts of Guatemala, as shown by Mr. Salvin, who states in his notes that he saw specimens in that country in 1863 (*vide* Ibis, 1865) :—" Another common wader frequenting the sandbanks was the Brown Snipe, *Macrorhamphus griseus*. I used always to see it feeding in the open, where there was no cover whatever, its habits strongly contrasting in this respect with those of the Common Snipe, to which it is closely allied. This bird and the European Woodcock, *Scolopax rusticola*, seem to represent two extremes as regards choice of feeding-ground, the true Snipes occupying an intermediate place."

"This bird," says Wilson, "has a considerable resemblance to the Common Snipe, not only in its general form, size, and colour, but likewise in the excellence of its flesh, which is in high estimation. It differs, however, greatly from the Common Snipe in its manners and in many other peculiarities, a few of which, as far as I have myself observed, may be sketched as follows :—

"The Red-breasted Snipe arrives on the sea-coast of New Jersey early in April; is seldom or never seen inland; early in May it proceeds to the north to breed, and returns by the latter part of July or beginning of August. During its stay here it flies in flocks, sometimes very high, and has then a loud and shrill whistle, making many evolutions over the marshes—forming, dividing, and reuniting. They sometimes