

LIMICOLA PYGMÆA.

Broad-billed Sandpiper.

Numenius pygmaeus, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 713.

——— *pusillus*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 152.

Tringa platyrhyncha, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. ii. p. 616.

——— *eloriodes*, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxxiv. p. 465.

——— *pygmæa*, Savi, Orn. Tosc., tom. ii. p. 291.

Limicola pygmæa, Koch, Baier. Zool., tom. i. p. 315.

Pelidna platyrhyncha, Cuv., Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 50.

THE bird now under consideration is not a regular migrant, and hence it must be classed among our accidental visitors. On the Continent it is more common, dwelling in its southern portions during winter, and retiring in summer to Norway, Sweden, and Lapland, to breed and rear its young. Of all the Sandpipers it is probably the one which approaches most nearly to the *Scolopacidae*; and although quite distinct in structure from the little Jack Snipe, it strongly reminds us of that bird, in its small size and general contour, and also in some of its habits. M. Godefroy Lunel, Conservator of the Museum of the Academy of Geneva, has published, in the first volume of the 'Bulletin de la Société Ornithologique Suisse,' a very carefully written account of its peculiarities, which is too lengthy for entire transcription, but from which I shall venture to give a translation of the less technical portion.

"The broad-billed Sandpiper appears in the environs of Montpellier every year during the earlier part of August, when a few isolated individuals are captured in the nets laid by the bird-catchers in the neighbourhood of the marshes. By their means I have had opportunities of examining numerous specimens, both dead and living, and of making myself acquainted with the remarkable structure of the beak, whence it obtained one of its specific names. It is soft and flexible throughout its entire length, depressed and slightly bent towards the point, with a lateral furrow extending nearly to the tip of each mandible. The two branches of the inferior maxillary are completely ossified in their anterior third, and are contiguous for the remainder of their length, but not united. The skin of the chin, which embraces the base of the beak and the triangle formed by the bifurcation of the base of the lower mandible, is square at the top of the throat, devoid of feathers, and forms a small pouch, which may be contracted by the bird at pleasure; it is of a reddish ash-colour during life, but becomes yellowish and wrinkled after death. It is small in young birds, but appears to increase in size as they advance in age."

I find only three instances recorded of the bird's appearance in our Islands, namely, two in England, and one in Ireland. The first of the English specimens was killed on the muddy flats of Breydon Broad, in Norfolk, on the 25th of May, 1836; the second, near Shoreham, in Sussex, in October, 1845. The Irish example was killed on the oozy banks of Belfast Bay, on the 4th of October, 1844, with eleven Golden Plovers and seven or eight Dunlins, at one shot from a swivel-gun.

The late Mr. Wheelwright says:—"Till within the last few years the Broad-billed Sandpiper appears to have been entirely overlooked in Sweden; but I do not think it is so very rare there. Twelve years ago I shot three specimens in August, in the very south of the country; since then I have shot the bird in Wermland; and now I have taken the nest in Luleå, Lapland. Of all the Sandpipers this certainly is the most unobtrusive and the shiest in its habits; and its custom of creeping among the grass, like a little mouse, causes it to be very seldom seen. When flushed, which is never until you nearly tread upon it, it rises with a faint single call-note, flies for a very little distance, then suddenly drops; and it is next to impossible to get it up a second time without a dog. I only found one nest, in a high-fell meadow."

Mr. Dann informed Mr. Yarrell that "this Sandpiper is by no means uncommon during the breeding-season in Luleå, and Tornea Lapmark, frequenting grassy morasses and swamps, in small colonies, generally in the same places as those frequented by the Wood-Sandpiper. It breeds also at Fogstuen, on the Dovrefjeld mountains (about three thousand feet above the level of the sea), in Norway, where it arrives at the latter end of May. On its first appearance it is wild and shy, and similar in its habits to the other species of the genus, feeding on the grassy borders of the small pools and lakes in the morasses; on being disturbed it soars to a great height in the air, rising and falling suddenly like the Snipe, uttering the notes *too whee*, which are rapidly repeated. As the weather becomes warm its habits totally change—skulking and creeping through the dead grass, and allowing itself to be followed within a few yards, and, when flushed, dropping again a short distance off. It seems to lay its eggs later than others of this tribe generally do. I found some not sat upon on the 24th of June; and the last week in July, the young were unable to fly—a period when all the other Sandpipers are on the move south. Its nest, like that of the