

Von Baer states that the Purple Sandpiper is one of the eight species of birds found in Nova Zembla ; and it is mentioned in each of Sir Edward Parry's Voyages,—in the first, as being abundant in Davis's Strait and Baffin's Bay ; in the second, as seen on the rocks at low-water mark on Winter Island in June ; in the third, as observed at Port Bowen ; and in the fourth, as being very abundant along the shores of Heda Cove ; and it was also seen in considerable numbers near Fury Point. Sir John Richardson says it "breeds abundantly on Melville Peninsula and the shores of Hudson's Bay. Its eggs are pyriform, sixteen lines and a half long, and an inch across at their greatest breadth. Their colour is yellowish grey, interspersed with irregular spots of pale hair-brown, crowded at the obtuse end, and rare at the other."

After the breeding-season is over, the Purple Sandpiper leaves Arctic America and proceeds southward. Audubon states that in autumn and winter it is nowhere more abundant than in the neighbourhood of the harbour of Boston, in the market of which city it is sold in great numbers during those seasons. When he was there, a gunner brought him several dozens which he had killed in the course of a single afternoon ; he had also seen them in the markets of New York, but remarks that further south they are not met with. At Bodo, on the western coast of Norway, Mr. Percy Godman shot some examples on the 4th of May, and states that the bird was to be seen on the islands in the neighbourhood throughout the summer. Temminck informs us that it is found on the shores of the Baltic, also on those of the Mediterranean, and that it is very common in Holland ; but I do not find any other author giving the shores of the Mediterranean as one of its habitats ; still we must not discredit the statement, since Mr. F. du Cane Godman has recorded that it is an inhabitant of a country quite as far south as the Azores. "A small flock," says this gentleman, "was usually to be seen in company with some Turnstones, about the rocks, near Santa Cruz, in Flores. I was told that in summer they are frequently seen upon the rough pasture-land high up in the mountains. The people say they go there to feed in hot weather ; but I suspect they breed there as well, since a lad at Santa Cruz told me he had shot very young birds ; no one, however, that I met with could give me any information about their nesting-habits. The only specimen I procured was a male in full summer plumage, shot in June." That the bird breeds in Iceland is certain ; for Mr. Alfred Newton has placed in my hands a chick labelled as having been obtained by him in that country on the 16th of July, 1858 ; and in his 'Notes on the Ornithology of Iceland,' he says, it is "common everywhere in the neighbourhood of the coast, and occasionally to be seen inland, where it also breeds. According to Faber, a resident. Hatches its eggs about the middle of June. Great numbers are shot about Reykjavik in spring, and are sold for the table."

It is said to turn over stones to search for insects among the sea-weed, it also eats small shrimps, sand-hoppers, and little mollusks.

As is the case with most of the Sandpipers, little or no difference is observable in the colouring of the sexes ; but they would seem to differ considerably in size ; for, upon dissecting a number of specimens, the larger birds proved to be invariably females.

In winter, the head and all the upper surface are dark purplish brown, with a narrow edging of grey at the top of the back and scapulary feathers ; wings dark brown, each feather margined with greyish white ; primaries with white shafts, and a fine edging of white at the tip ; central tail-feathers dark purplish brown ; the lateral feathers pale brown, with white shafts and margins ; eye surrounded by a nearly perfect circle of white, an obscure line of greyish white from the bill to the eye ; throat also white ; chest purplish brown, the lower feathers crescented with white at the tip ; the remainder of the undersurface greyish white, with a patch of light purplish brown in the centre of each feather ; bill orange at the base, black at the tip ; irides black ; legs and feet orange.

A summer specimen, from Greenland, has the feathers of the back and scapularies margined with deep fawn or light chestnut, the markings of white about the face and neck less apparent, and the flanks conspicuously streaked with light brown.

In another, from Wellington Channel, the margins of the back and scapularies are mingled fawn and white, the sides of the neck and throat are striated with brown, and the markings on the chest assume a spotted appearance.

The chick is dark brown, marbled with fawn-colour and grey above, and is greyish white beneath.

The front figure represents the bird in the winter plumage ; those in the distance have nearly assumed their summer dress ; but it must, of course, be understood that both states are not to be found at the same time.