

ACTODROMAS MINUTA.

Little Stint.

- Tringa minuta*, Leisl. Nacht. zu Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. i. p. 74.
—— *cinclus*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 201.
—— *pusilla*, Wolf et Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. ii. p. 391.
—— *Temminckii*, Koch, Baier. Zool., tom. i. p. 292.
Pelidna minuta, Boie, Isis, 1826, p. 979.
—— *pusilla*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 666.
Actodromas minuta, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 55.

ALTHOUGH this pretty species of Sandpiper has been very frequently killed in England and repeatedly in Ireland, its presence can never be looked for with certainty; moreover it does not breed with us; for though specimens occur in the red or nuptial dress, they are merely *en route* to the northern regions to deposit their eggs and rear their little progenies in countries almost unknown to us, the only record I find of their breeding in any place being that mentioned by Dr. David Walker in his "Notes on the Voyage of 'The Fox,'" who says, "The winter of 1858-59 was spent at Port Kennedy, in the mouth of Bellot Straits, 72° 11' N., 94° W. Early in June numbers of *Tringa minuta* and *T. interpres* were found breeding in the marshy valleys." It is indeed most remarkable that (with this exception, if Dr. Walker is correct as to the identity of the species seen by him) the true incubating home of a bird which ranges over Europe, the whole of Africa, Asia Minor, Persia, India, China, and Japan should not have been discovered.

With regard to the connexion of the Little Stint with our avifauna, Mr. Yarrell says:—"The species was first mentioned by Pennant as a British Bird from a specimen killed in Cambridgeshire, and is most frequent on the southern and eastern shores of this country. Indeed, from the eastern localities comprised within the geographical range of this bird, it is probable that it seldom comes so far westward as the British Islands, when on its way, in the spring, to the high northern latitudes in which a portion of them every year produce their young." He then proceeds to mention that the appearance of both old and young birds in autumn in the vicinity of the Solway has several times been recorded, that it has occurred in the western part of Lancashire, that from forty to fifty were seen on the Laira mud-banks near Plymouth in October 1840, that the bird has been frequently observed on the coast of Sussex, that he had obtained them in the London markets in the summer and winter plumage, but most frequently in that of autumn (when, indeed, they are more common than at any other period of the year), that a flock of thirty was seen in Romney Marsh, 1839, and that they are numerous on the coasts of Suffolk, Norfolk, Yorkshire, and Durham, but are not so often killed in the more northern counties. "They are most frequently found on the sandy shores of the sea, and generally in company with the Dunlin or the Sanderling, or both, as they fly in small and sometimes in large flocks together. They select for food aquatic insects, small crustacea, worms, and mollusks."

According to Mr. Rodd it is occasionally seen in Cornwall, and specimens obtained from salt marshes near the sea, Marazion marsh and Hayle estuary.

Neither Sir William Jardine nor MacGillivray met with the bird in Scotland; and although Thompson says it is a regular autumnal visitant to Ireland, it appears there in extremely limited numbers. More recently, however, it has been stated that a specimen was obtained at Fraserburgh in September 1854; and the Rev. F. O. Morris mentions that one was killed by William Strang, Esq., in Orkney in 1837, and another seen by him in 1848.

Temminck says that in its passage it visits the borders of the rivers in Germany and France, and in autumn is to be found on the great marshes of Holland, but rarely on its maritime coasts, that it is very common on the lake of Geneva and occurs in great numbers on the salt marshes of Dalmatia in August and September in the garb of winter, and that those seen on their passage through France are in their perfect nuptial plumage. Nilsson states it is found in Sweden from spring to autumn; but Mr. Dann informed Mr. Yarrell that it is by no means common there, and that the only specimens he met with were in autumn, in the flooded grounds on the banks of rivers and lakes, where, on being approached, they squat down and allow you to advance within a few feet of them. Mr. Selby mentions that he had received specimens in almost perfect plumage from Italy, where it has also been observed by Dr. Henry Giglioli in the neighbourhood of Pisa.

Loche mentions it as a bird of passage in Algeria; and the Zoological Society have received specimens