

# ANCYLOCHEILUS SUBARQUATA.

## Curlew Sandpiper.

- Scolopax subarquata*, Gld. Comm. Petrop., tom. xix. p. 471  
 ——— *africanus*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 655.  
 ——— *Dethardingii*, Bechst. Tr. of Lath. Syn., tom. v. p. 139, tab. 123.  
*Numenius subarquata*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 135.  
 ——— *pygmæus*, Bechst. ibid., p. 148.  
 ——— *africanus*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 712.  
 ——— *ferrugineus*, Wolf & Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vg., tom. ii. p. 356.  
*Tringa pygmæa*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit Mus., p. 30.  
 ——— *subarquata*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 1815, p. 393.  
 ——— *falcinella*, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 188.  
 ——— *ferruginea*, Brnn. Orn. Bor., no. 180.  
 ——— *islandica*, Retz. edit. Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 192.  
*Pelidna subarquata*, Cuv., Brehm, Vg. Deutschl., p. 657.  
 ——— *macrorhynchos*, Brehm, Vg. Deutschl., p. 657.  
*Ancylocheilus subarquata*, Kaup, Natrl. Syst., p. 50.  
 ——— *subarquatus*, Loche, Cat. des Mamm. et Ois. obs. en Algrie, p. 130.

THIS elegant species, which is trivially called Pigmy Curlew and Curlew Sandpiper, is neither scarce nor common in the British Islands, but is more abundant at some seasons than at others. Generally speaking, it is adults in their light or winter dress, and the young in the mottled plumage of immaturity, that are seen during the autumnal months, and the red or nuptial-costumed birds that occur in spring. It is the remarkable coloration of the plumage at this latter season, and the white rump at all times, that distinguish this species from the Dunlin and all others of the smaller *Tringinae*, and constitute probably one of the reasons why Dr. Kaup assigned to it a new generic appellation, that of *Ancylocheilus*. That it does not breed in the British Islands is almost certain; for we have no evidence of its eggs having ever been found herein; neither is it precisely known to what country it proceeds for that purpose—most probably, as is believed, to the high northern regions, to which it is supposed the red-plumaged birds, which pass us in spring, are migrating. Temminck, it is true, states that it breeds occasionally in Holland, and deposits four or five eggs of a yellowish colour spotted with brown; but this requires confirmation. With us in England, as also in Ireland and Scotland, it is frequently seen associated with the strand-loving Dunlin and the Ring-Dottrel; of this I have positive evidence from a circumstance which will never occur to me again, and seldom to any one else. It is now many years ago since I was collecting birds on the sandy sea-shore, on the coast of Kent, when a flock of shore-birds winged their way past me with their usual rapidity of flight; with the quickness of thought I fired into the middle of the flock; and three birds, and three only, dropped to my shot; on picking them up, one proved to be a Curlew Sandpiper, another a Ring-Dottrel, and the third a Dunlin, of which species I had imagined the flock to solely consist.

That the Curlew Sandpiper is of a very wandering disposition, and widely spread over the earth's surface, is most certain; for not only is it found in all suitable portions of Europe, but over the greater part of Asia, the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Australia. It is also abundant in many parts of North America, where, as in this country, it migrates northward in spring, and on its return visits Mexico, and probably proceeds still further in a southerly direction. It has been observed in North Africa; and there are records of its occurrence in the southern division of that continent.

The general contour of the Curlew Sandpiper is very elegant, its flight is exceedingly swift, and its actions on the ground are equally quick and animated; indeed it may be regarded as one of the most attractive of the group of birds with which it is associated.

Although noticed by every ornithologist who has written on our strand-birds, little has been recorded in this or any other country respecting its habits. Mr. Stevenson, in his 'Birds of Norfolk,' merely says, "this species is not unfrequently met with on our coast both in spring and autumn, and more particularly at the latter season. From my own observations, more specimens seem to be obtained in September and October than at any other time. Messrs. Sheppard and Whitear remark that it is more solitary than the Dunlin, not more than a pair being seen together, and is a stupid bird, suffering a boat to approach close to it. At Blakeney Mr. Dowell describes them as 'not very rare, occurring for the most part singly, amongst flocks of Dunlins, and are easily distinguishable by their gait and longer bill and conspicuous white tail-coverts.'