

CALIDRIS ARENARIA.

Sanderling.

- Tringa arenaria*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 251.
Charadrius calidris, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 255.
Arenaria calidris, Meyer, Taschenb. deutsch. Vög., tom. vii. p. 68, tab. 59. fig. 4.
—— *vulgaris*, Bechst. Ornith. Taschenb., tom. ii. p. 462.
Calidris arenaria, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. & Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 28.
Charadrius rubidus, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 688.
Arenaria grisea, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 368.
Calidris grisea, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 674.
Tringa tridactyla, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 198.

I KNOW of no class of persons so assiduous and so daring as the collectors of birds' eggs,—whether it be the plough-boy sitting on a stile with the eggs of a Magpie brought down from the waving branches of the loftiest tree in the hedgerow, or the undergraduate who risks his life in climbing a frowning precipice for the eggs of the Chough or swims a cold loch to examine the eyrie of the Osprey, or those who take a perilous voyage to the inhospitable regions of Spitzbergen for the chance of obtaining the nest of the Ivory Gull or (like that most enthusiastic of oologists, the late Mr. John Wolley) endure the rigours of a Lapland winter to secure the spring-laid eggs of the Waxen Chatterer. With Mr. Wolley, however, as with almost every other collector, the eggs of the Sanderling were a desideratum; and I am sure there is more than one amongst us who would start for Nova Zembla to-morrow, could he be assured beforehand of the certainty of obtaining this great object of his desire. Although the Sanderling is very generally spread over both the European and American portions of the northern hemisphere, its breeding-place has not yet been discovered: all we know is that, as certain as the season of autumn recurs, little knots of Sanderlings are seen on our sea-shores and the sandy spits of our estuaries, their snowy breasts and light-grey backs offering a marked contrast to the other Sandpipers with which they are frequently associated. Here they remain during winter. As spring-time approaches, these white and light-grey birds change their plumage, and by April and May are richly coloured with marblings of red and black, particularly on the upper surface, neck, and chest: the time of their departure is now at hand, and shortly after they simultaneously depart for their summer home; but where that may be, still remains a mystery. For myself I have no doubt that it is in a land still further north than man has yet penetrated; and that a country habitable for a short season exists near the North Pole we have every reason to believe.

It is not only in England that this bird is found during autumn, winter, and spring: it enjoys, indeed, a very extensive range of habitat, being spread over every suitable part of Europe, the shores of the Mediterranean, and as far east as that great inland sea extends. It is also found in India; and Prof. Baird states that it is found throughout the temperate regions of North and South America generally. Notwithstanding what I have said respecting our want of knowledge of the eggs and breeding-places of the Sanderling, I must not omit to mention that, in the 'Fauna Boreali-Americana,' Dr. Richardson says it "breeds on the coast of Hudson's Bay as low as the fifty-fifth parallel;" and Mr. Hutchins informed him that "it makes its nest in the marshes, rudely, of grass, and lays four dusky-coloured eggs spotted with black, incubation commencing in the middle of June."

This statement, however, I doubt not, is founded on error, and refers to some species of small Plover. Faber and, after him, Mr. Procter, observed it on Grimsey, in Iceland, where it has been said to breed; but Dr. Kruper rightly remarks that the eggs fathered upon it by the inhabitants are doubtless those of the Ringed Plover; and Mr. A. Newton says that he knows of no one who has an authenticated egg of the Sanderling. In 1858 this gentleman saw several in the south-west of Iceland, and shot a female with a very backward ovary on the 21st of May at Bæjasker; and Mr. Fowler saw it in 1862 at Akranes.

"The Sanderlings," says Macgillivray, "appear in small flocks on our northern coasts on both sides of the island as early as the beginning of September. Their numbers gradually increase, until in winter, when they are met with in all parts, they collect into large bands, which frequent the sandy shores and muddy estuaries, often mingling with various species of *Tringa*, but especially with the Dunlins. In searching for their food, which consists of small worms, testacea, and sometimes insects, they run with rapidity when following the margin of the wave, but more sedately in other circumstances, patting and probing the soft sand or mud with their bills, which they seldom introduce to any depth. It is pleasant to watch a flock so occupied, the liveliness of the little creatures, and their clean and beautiful plumage, together with the mutual