

TRYNGITES RUFESCENS.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Tringa rufescens, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxxiv. p. 470.

Actitis rufescens, Schleg. Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., p. 92.

Tryngites rufescens, Cab.

Tringoides rufescens, G. R. Gray, Cat. of Brit. Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 161.

HAVING little or nothing to communicate respecting the habits and economy of this exceedingly rare species of Sandpiper, I may be allowed to compensate as far as may be for this deficiency by calling the attention of my readers to the great elegance of its form, the neatness of its appearance, and the beautifully pencilled markings of the underside of its primaries. In those two great groups of birds the *Trochilidæ* and *Paradisiadæ* (Humming-birds and Birds of Paradise), I could undertake to show that singularity of structure and ornamentation have been carried out in various parts of the body and in nearly every distinct set of feathers. In some of the former, as in *Cephalapis*, the feathers of the crown are lengthened into elegant crests; in others, as in *Eriocnemis*, the upper tail-coverts are largely developed and wonderfully coloured, while in *Hypuroptila* it is the under tail-coverts that are conspicuously displayed. Among the Birds of Paradise some have trimly cut mantles, others a kind of apron; that remarkable bird the *Semioptera Wallacei* has two of its secondary wing-feathers greatly prolonged and placed at a right angle to the remainder; and hundreds of other equally singular instances might be quoted of what we can only regard as decorative ornamentation; and if it is not for the same purpose that the beautiful pencillings of the under surface of the primaries of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper have been designed, I really know no other; and, indeed, the true reason will probably never be known. The bird was first made known to science by M. Vieillot—who described a specimen from Louisiana, in the second edition of the “Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Histoire Naturelle,” tom. xxxiv. p. 470, as *Tringa rufescens*,—and was first recorded and figured as a member of our avifauna by Mr. Yarrell, in the 16th volume of the ‘Transactions of the Linnean Society,’ p. 109, pl. 11, from a specimen obtained by him in the autumn of 1826. Since that date several other examples have been procured in various parts of England, and one in Ireland; but its visits to our islands must be regarded as purely accidental, as, indeed, must also be its occurrence on the continent of Europe, its proper home being America, in the northern parts of which country it breeds and passes the summer, and thence migrates to other parts of the United States, Central and South America, as far as Brazil, where, according to Natterer, it is common. From all of these countries I have seen specimens; and I would here record my obligations to Dr. Rae for his kindness in presenting me with a fine pair, obtained by him at Repulse Bay, on the 14th of June, 1854, during one of the Arctic Expeditions in search of my lamented friend Sir John Franklin.

As the bird is so rare, it will be well perhaps to enumerate all the instances with which I am acquainted of its occurrence in our islands.

Mr. Yarrell's specimen was shot early in the month of September 1826, in the parish of Melbourne, in Cambridgeshire, in company with some Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*). A specimen preserved in the Museum at Norwich was killed at Sherringham, on the coast of Norfolk.

A male, killed in May 1829, at Formby, on the banks of the river Alt, about thirteen miles north of Liverpool, was sent to the market of that town for sale, along with some Snipes, and now forms part of the fine collection of British Birds belonging to the Rev. Thomas Staniforth, of Storr's Hall, Windermere.

A fourth example, shot at Yarmouth, in the autumn of 1839 or 1840, was formerly in the possession of the late T. C. Heysham, at Carlisle.

Two more are mentioned as having been killed on the coast of Norfolk—one on the 22nd of September, 1841, and the other on Breydon Broad, September 20th, 1843.

Stephen Stone, Esq., of Brighthampton, informed the Rev. F. O. Morris that another was met with on some low land through which the Isis flows, near Bampton, in Oxfordshire. Thompson says:—“According to F. M'Coy, Esq., one shot by J. Hill, Esq., near the Pigeon-house, Dublin Bay, is preserved in the Museum of the Natural-History Society of that city. When the bird was killed is not stated.”

Mr. H. Blake-Knox has recorded, in the ‘Zoologist’ for 1866, that one was shot early in the morning about the beginning of 1864, by Mr. Joyce, in company with another, too much injured for preserving, on a piece of slob land called the People's Park, beside the town of Belfast.

In the ‘Zoologist’ for 1843, F. Bond, Esq., has recorded that a specimen, obtained on the Sussex coast, had lately come into his possession.