

## ACTITIS MACULARIUS.

### Spotted Sandpiper.

*Tringa macularia*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 249.

*Totanus macularius*, Temm. Man. d'Orn. (1815), p. 422.

*Actitis macularia*, Boie, Isis, 1826, p. 979.

*Tringoides macularia*, G. R. Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 574.

SOME ornithologists believe that the Spotted Sandpiper is a myth, so far as regards the avifauna of Great Britain, notwithstanding the most positive assurances of its capture are given in the works of Bewick, Yarrell, and others. However this may be, as regards England, there seems to be no doubt of its occurrence in Scotland; for Mr. Gray's recently published valuable work on the birds of the western part of that country states that authentic instances, the only ones it is true, of this rare bird being found in Scotland were communicated to him by his obliging friend and correspondent, Mr. Angus, of Aberdeen, who states that a male and female were left at the Aberdeen Museum in August 1867, in the absence of Mr. Mitchell, who up to the present moment does not know by whom the birds were presented or where they were shot. Both were in the flesh and had not been long dead; they were prettily marked and somewhat dissimilar in size, the male being the largest. The female is now in Mr. Angus's cabinet; the other has been kindly presented by Mr. Mitchell to Mr. Gray, and is now in his collection. With such evidence as this, published as late as 1871, and presuming that at least some of the fifteen occurrences recorded by Mr. Harting in his 'Handbook of British Birds' are authentic, we can scarcely assert that it has never been seen in the British Islands, especially as we know that the bird, like the common Summer Snipe, is a great wanderer both over some parts of Europe and the extensive continent of America. Nilsson, in his 'Fauna of Scandinavia,' says it is often seen in the north of Europe, and that specimens have been killed in Sweden, on the islands in the Baltic, and in Gothland. Temminck also refers to it as having been killed in Germany in the neighbourhood of the Rhine; and Meyer and Wolf and Brehm also include it among the birds of that country—a fact which induces me to believe that the bird does now and then stray over to our island. As regards America I have reason to believe it is more constant in Texas and the country lying northward from there to Newfoundland than in any other part of that continent. It is also, we know, either an inhabitant or a migrant over the West Indies and many parts of South America, Mr. Clarence Bartlett having brought from Surinam many very beautiful specimens obtained during his short visit to that country.

The works of American ornithologists teem with information respecting the Spotted Sandpiper, the more important of which I will take the liberty of extracting. In that of Audubon it is stated:—"The Spotted Sandpiper has a wonderfully extensive range; for I have met with it, not only in most parts of the United States, but also on the shores of Labrador, where, on the 17th of June, 1833, I found it breeding. On the 29th of July the young were fully fledged and scampering over the rocks about us, amid the putrid and drying cod fish. In that country it breeds later by three months than in Texas; for on the head waters of Buffalo Bayou, about sixty miles from the margin of the Mexican Gulf, I saw broods already well grown on the 5th of May, 1837. On the same day of the same month in 1832, a similar occurrence happened on an island near Indian Key, on the south-east coast of Florida. In Newfoundland, on the other hand, the young were just fully fledged on the 11th of August. It appears strange that none were observed by Dr. Richardson on the shores of Hudson's Bay, or in the interior of that country. They are quite abundant along the margins of the Mississippi, the Ohio, and their tributaries. On the Island of Jestico, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, about twenty pairs had nests and eggs on the 11th of June; and the air was filled with the pleasing sound of their voices while we remained there. The nests were placed among the tall slender grass that covered the southern part of the island. They were more bulky and more neatly constructed than any that I have examined southward of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; and yet they were not to be compared with those found in Labrador, where in every instance they were concealed under ledges of rocks extending for several feet over them; so that I probably should not have observed them, had not the birds flown off as I was passing. These nests were made of dry moss, raised to the height of from six to nine inches and well finished within with slender grasses and feathers of the Eider Duck. As usual, however, the eggs were always four when the bird was sitting. They measure an inch and a quarter in length by an inch at their thickest part; so that they have a shortish and bulky appearance, though they run almost to a point. They are smooth and handsomely marked with blotches of deep brown, and others of a