

## ACTITIS HYPOLEUCOS.

### Summer Snipe.

*Tringa minor*, Ray, Syn., p. 108, A. 6.

—— *hypoleucos*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 250.

—— *leucoptera*, Pall.

*Actitis hypoleucos*, Ill. Prodr. Syst. Mamm. et Av., p. 262.

*Totanus hypoleucos*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. i. p. 657, et tom. iv. p. 419.

*Tringoides hypoleucos*, Gray, Cat. of Gen. and Subgen. of Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 117.

*Actites hypoleucus*, Blas. List of Birds of Europe, Engl. edit., p. 18.

*Actitis empusa*, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., part xv. 1847, p. 222?

How much pleasure have they lost who have not seen this nimble and elegant species tripping over the pebbly bottoms of our rivulets or the greensward fringing the river-banks, or witnessed how it imparts life to the scene in the neighbourhood of the glassy Highland loch! For myself, I have always regarded it with especial interest. Faithful as is the Swallow to the time of its coming, and cheering as are the associations connected with its visit, the arrival of this bird, in the middle of April, gives an additional zest to the anticipations of a forthcoming summer. The trivial English name of Summer Snipe, by which this species is so generally known, is singularly inappropriate; for it is in no way allied to the bird of sporting celebrity, but belongs to the Sandpipers, a totally different family, of which it is one of the most pleasing members. In its disposition it is meek, tame, and inoffensive. What the Pied Wagtail is to our lawns and gardens, and the Lark to our fields, the Summer Snipe is to the neighbourhood of our rivers and water-courses; there it trips before us when we leisurely walk on their green turfy banks, or take a cast for a trout among the gravel-beds of the stream; and it is certain to be one of the party in a pic-nic on the borders of some distant lake. In such situations it breeds; and here, if the proximity of its nest be invaded, it resorts to the usual artifice of passing backwards and forwards across the stream for the purpose of enticing us away from the cherished spot. Now is the time to observe its slow, laboured, and peculiar flight, performed so close to the water that the tips of the wings appear to touch the surface; now also is the time to observe its actions on the ground, the upflirting of its tail, the elegance with which it runs and leaps among and over the large pebbles, and the general gracefulness of its many movements. The Summer Snipe is a river and lacustrine species, seldom visiting the sea-shore, and that only prior to its departure to a warmer climate in September, when both the old birds and those which have been bred in the British Islands quit our shores for Portugal and Spain, and gradually pass onward to Africa.

There is no part of the British Islands, not even the outer Hebrides, in which this bird is not a denizen, or to which it is not a passing visitor, and so extensive is its range over the Old World that I believe it to be universally distributed in every suitable locality; the only exception to this wide-spread distribution being that it is not found in New Zealand and some of the Polynesian Islands—at least, I do not recollect to have seen examples from thence. It is certainly an inhabitant of Lapland and all the intervening countries to the Cape of Good Hope, from Russia to Aden in Arabia, from Siberia to Cape Comorin in India, and from Kamtschatka to China; Japan, Malacca, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, New Guinea, Timor, and Australia are also visited by this species. It is true that I have given the name of *Actitis empusa* to the Australian bird; but I now doubt its being distinct. How singular it is that a species so universally distributed over the Old World should not be found in the New! yet such, I believe, is the case; for I observe that Dr. Baird does not include it in his recently published 'List of the Birds of North America,' its place in that country being supplied by a species of the same form, so intimately allied to our bird in size and structure that its habits and economy must be similar in every respect; but that it is specifically distinct there is no doubt: the spotting of its breast has procured for it the appellation of *Actitis macularius*.

"The Common Sandpiper," says Mr. Selby, "is a bird of most lively habits, being continually in motion; for, whether running along the shore or perched upon a stone, its tail is ever moving up and down, and it has also a habit of nodding the head by suddenly stretching out and contracting the neck. Its flight is graceful, and is performed by a rapid motion of the pinions, succeeded by an interval of rest, the wings at the same time being considerably bent and forming an angle with the body; and in this manner it skims with rapidity over the surface of the water, not always flying in a straight line, but making occasional sweeps, uttering at the same time its shrill and well-known whistle. It breeds upon the banks of rivers and lakes, taking care to make its nest beyond the reach of the usual floods. The nest is generally placed under a