

TOTANUS OCHROPUS.

Green Sandpiper.

Tringa ochropus, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 250.

— *Aldrovandi*, Ray, Syn., p. 108, A 7, 8.

— *glareola*, Markw. in Trans. Linn. Soc., vol. i. p. 128, and vol. ii. p. 325.

Totanus ochropus, Temm. Man. d'Orn., p. 420.

—, *rivalis*, et *leucourus*, Brehm, Handb. Naturg. aller Vög. Deutschl., pp. 641, 642, 643.

Helodromos ochropus, Bonap. Compt. Rend. de l'Acad. des Sci., tom. 43, séances des 15 et 22 Sept. 1856.

Helodromas ochropus, A. Newton, in Proc. Zool. Soc. 1863, p. 529.

THOSE persons who are in the habit of wandering over meads and grassy lands, with their little round ponds for the watering of cattle, or by the sides of brooks, rivulets, and reservoirs, must have frequently risen a bird about the size of a Snipe, conspicuous for its strong and rapid flight, and for the loud whistling cry it emits as it mounts in the air. This is the Green Sandpiper—a bird which frequents the smallest water-holes as well as the margins of streams. In such situations this elegantly formed bird trips lightly over the oozy mud or along the edge of the water in search of insects and their larvæ. Although it is sometimes seen both in winter and summer, it is most frequently met with during its spring and autumnal migrations; at other periods it is either breeding in countries further north, or wintering in more southern latitudes. That it never stays and breeds with us is almost certain, notwithstanding the assertion of some ornithologists to the contrary. Wide-spread, indeed, is it in the countries of the Old World, since it is very generally distributed over the whole of Europe, Africa, India, China, and Japan. I have received specimens from Borneo; and it doubtless visits the neighbouring islands of Sumatra and Java, as it certainly does St. Helena in the South Atlantic.

That exceptions to general rules exist in the habits of birds as well as in all other animals, is shown in many instances; but, I presume, it never entered the brain of the most imaginative ornithologist that a Sandpiper laid its eggs high up in a tree, until the fact was made known by the foresters and *savans* of Scandinavia and Pomerania; and if positive and authentic evidence of the truth of their statements had not been produced, such an assertion would not have been believed. It is only as yesterday that its anomalous habit of depositing its eggs on the branches of trees has become known. The Peewit resorts for the purpose of nidification to open commons and waste lands, the Ruff, the Redshank and the Wood-Sandpiper to the marsh, the Summer Snipe to the sedgy banks of streams, and the Dunlin to the upland moors; the Green Sandpiper, on the other hand, searches for the deserted nest of a Pigeon, a Jay, a Thrush, or the drey of a Squirrel, in which to deposit its very beautiful eggs. This fact may take some of my readers by surprise; but all I have said is confirmed in a paper on the subject, read by Mr. Alfred Newton at the meeting of the Zoological Society of London held on the 8th of December 1863, of which the following are the more important passages:—

“In the ‘Journal für Ornithologie’ for 1855, Herr Wiese, writing on the Ornithology of Pomerania, especially in the district of Cöslin, says that he had first heard from an old sportsman, who knew the peculiarities of all the forest-animals, that the *Totanus ochropus* nested in old Thrushes’ nests, which information, he remarks, ‘I naturally did not believe;’ but he states that some years after, in 1845, he obtained from the same man four fine eggs of a bird of this species, which for many years had been wont to nestle in an old beech tree. Still doubtful on the subject, the following spring he himself found a nest of the bird on a pine which had a fork about five-and-twenty or thirty feet high. ‘Joyfully,’ he says, ‘I climbed the tree, and found in that fork four eggs on a simple bed of old moss.’ In the spring of 1853 he again obtained four eggs of the same species; and on the 25th of May 1854 he found four others placed in the old nest of a Song-Thrush, out of which the shed buds of the beech had not so much as been removed.

“In the ‘Naumannia’ for 1856, in an account of an excursion in Western Pomerania, Dr. Altum states that *Totanus ochropus* returns annually to its old nesting-places, these being Misseltoe-Thrushes’ nests, whose remains were still to be seen, often some hundred yards distant from the nearest pool, and their height fifteen feet or more from the ground. The same journal for 1857 contains a valuable series of observations on the birds of the same district by Herr W. Hintz, in which the author says that on the 6th of May, 1855, he found three eggs of this bird on an ‘Else’ [quære, *Pyrus domestica*?] in an old Dove’s nest, as he thinks, though he states it might have been that of a Jay. Formerly, he proceeds to remark, he had only observed this Sandpiper to use old nests of *Turdus musicus*, excepting once, when he found some young ones, only a few days old, hard by a river-bank on a layer of pine-needles on an ‘Else’-stub. * * *