

Redshank should rather be attributed to a restlessness of disposition, which is even manifested when the bird is on the wing; for not more than a moment does a flock present the same appearance. It is now a round ball, next instant shoots out like a sky-rocket, appears in single file, and, after assuming every imaginable form, perhaps rolls itself into a ball again, the whole being done with equal rapidity and grace, whether it rises high into the air or sweeps the surface of the sea. Its varied action on the ground is very pleasing, and the nodding of the head is often quite grotesque; indeed, at Roundstone or Connemara, where the bird is numerous, it is commonly known by the name of '*Shake*,' on account of this habit.

"Every month in the year the Redshank may be seen about our shores, though in the breeding-season not more than one will be met with for a hundred at other times. Little flocks, as well as single birds and pairs, occur on the coast in the height of summer. I saw flocks of them on the 20th and 21st of June 1832, about some of the low rocky islets in Strangford Lough; and our boatman stated that the Redshanks breed on some of the islands every year, and that they find their nests, containing three or four eggs each, on the gravelly or shingly beach. Among inland localities they breed in the Bog of Allen, and near Mountainstown, in the county of Meath, as numbers annually do in moory swamps about Lough Conn and on the banks of the river Mayo, in the county of that name.

"Naturalists, treating of this species as a *British* bird, seem to consider that all the Redshanks frequenting the shore are bred in the country. They describe it as on the coast in autumn and winter, and retiring inland to breed, without, so far as I have observed, alluding to any migration northward of Great Britain for that purpose. Of the numbers, however, that are on the Irish coast the vast majority must have been brought up in more northern latitudes."—THOMPSON, *Birds of Ireland*, vol. ii. pp. 202 *et seq.*

"Grateful to the ear as the melody of the Song-Thrush when heard from the branches of the yet leafless trees," says Mr. Stevenson, "or the first whistle of the Stone Curlew and the Ringed Plover in their desolate haunts on the warrens and 'breck' lands, is the scream of the Redshank in the early spring, just returned to its summer haunts amidst the broads and marshes. In such localities, in very mild seasons, they may be heard as early as the middle of February, but are more generally seen in pairs about the beginning of March, when their nervous actions and swift jerking flight, added to their incessant and clamorous cries, enliven the dreariest waste of marshy ground. It is noticeable also that, in the breeding-season, the male Redshank has a 'song' of its own, quite as much as the Ringed Plover or the Common Snipe. More than once too, in the early spring, have I seen the male bird, as Mr. Lubbock describes it, 'pirouetting' on a gatepost, now running quickly along the top rail, calling loudly to its mate, now bowing and fluttering like an amorous pigeon, and less mindful of danger than at any other time. The first eggs are usually laid by the middle of April, and are so artfully concealed that, unless their construction is known, many might pass unnoticed in a very small space. A hollow is formed in the centre of a tuft of grass, part of which, trodden down, forms the only lining, whilst the remainder, arching over as it were at the top, effectually conceals the eggs from view; and as the bird enters and leaves it from the side, and the grasses are either drawn or fall naturally over the openings, the little runs thus made in the surrounding herbage are the only guides to its whereabouts. I have examined several of these singular evidences of instinctive wisdom, and have always found four to be the full complement of eggs, laid in a slight hollow, with their small ends inwards.

"During incubation, and more especially when the young are hatched, the parent birds become even more difficult of approach, and leaving their nests, like Lapwings, on the first alarm, fly screaming round the intruder, their anxiety being evinced by strange aerial evolutions."

For some very interesting details respecting the actions of the birds under these circumstances I must refer my readers to Mr. Stevenson's valuable '*Birds of Norfolk*,' vol. ii., from which the above extract was taken.

Mr. W. Vincent Legge, in his '*Oological Notes from South-east Essex*,' remarks that the eggs of the Redshank appear to "vary much in character." They are mostly of an ochre-yellow or greenish yellow ground, with bluish grey spots, and then blotched all over, especially at the larger end, with sepia. One clutch had the ground greenish white, with minute specks of brown over the whole surface, and large blotches and clouds of sepia round the larger end; these were much pointed, and the shells very thin.

The summer plumage of the Redshank differs very considerably from that of winter. At the former season the body is strongly spotted and marked with black, while at the latter the upper surface is of a nearly uniform tint, and the under surface is much whiter. During flight a W-shaped mark produced by the white tips of the primaries and secondaries shows very conspicuously.

The Plate represents a male and a female in summer plumage, and a young bird of the first autumn, all of the natural size.