

NUMENIUS PHÆOPUS.

Whimbrel.

Scolopax phæopus, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 60.

——— *borealis*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 654.

Numenius phæopus, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 711.

——— *minor*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 32.

——— *hudsonicus*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 712.

——— *islandicus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 610.

Phæopus arquatus, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 36.

WHIMBRELS usually arrive in England in the early part of May, and disperse themselves along our coasts, particularly those of the eastern counties; they are then on their passage northwards; but a few remain to breed on the moors of Scotland, and perhaps on those of the northern parts of England also; but if any nests be found in our southern counties, the circumstance must be regarded as quite exceptional. Still it cannot be denied that a few remain and winter with us. On the Continent, the high lands of Norway, Sweden, Lapland, and Iceland are, among others, favourite breeding-localities.

Its range over the Old World is very extensive; for, besides occurring in all parts of Europe, Mr. Edward Vernon Harcourt includes it in his 'List of the Birds of Madeira;' Mr. F. du Cane Godman states that it is occasionally met with on the coasts of the Azores; it is found all over Africa from north to south; according to Mr. Jerdon it is very generally dispersed over India, and is supposed to go to Java, China, and Japan; indeed its range is probably even still more extensive; but it is not found in America, neither does it frequent Australia.

Mr. Stevenson's account of the Whimbrel as observed by him in Norfolk being equally descriptive of the bird in other localities, I quote it in his own words:—"The Whimbrel visits us regularly in spring and autumn, on its passage to and from its breeding-grounds; and though a few may be seen occasionally in March or April, the appearance of the main body in May on the Breydon and Blakeney muds is so invariable that the species is always spoken of as the 'May-Bird' by the gunners in both localities. Their numbers, as with all migratory shore-birds, vary much in different seasons; but at times they are very plentiful, as was particularly the case in the spring of 1863. Of these, the chief portion pass on to the northward after a few days: but small parties may be seen on different parts of the coast up to the middle of June, and even as late as July. At Hunstanton, in 1863, I found one or two small flocks frequenting the mussel-scalps up to the second week in June; and Mr. Dowell has observed them at Blakeney, in two or three different seasons, between the 25th and 30th of July, 'not paired off, but keeping together in "herds" of from eight to ten,' most probably birds which would neither breed here nor elsewhere during that summer. By the end of August or the beginning of September, old and young together have again commenced their southward journey; but the numbers then seen are but few in comparison with the spring flight. In Mr. Dowell's notes I find no mention of this bird having been observed by him at Blakeney later than the first week in October; and Mr. F. Frere describes them as always scarce in autumn at Breydon, and rarely, if ever, seen during the winter months. Mr. Lubbock speaks of this species as having been occasionally very numerous at Horsey, visiting the marshes in considerable flocks in April and May; and in describing the habits of the bird he says:—"They are far more easy of access than the Curlews, and when disturbed make shorter flights, removing only from one marsh to another, instead of rising high in the air and forsaking the district altogether, as the Curlew generally does. They have a clattering confused cry in flight, which baffles any imitation by the human voice." This cry, however, according to Messrs. Sheppard and Whitear, resembles the sounds 'Weddy, tetty, tetty, tetty tet,' quickly repeated."

In confirmation of his assertion that these birds are very plentiful at some seasons more than at others, Mr. Stevenson refers to Mr. Cordeaux's statement, in the 'Zoologist,' that a flock of at least two hundred appeared in the Humber district about the 3rd of May, and that on the 13th of May, 1868, he counted up to sixty-one in one flock, and saw another containing not less than double that number; and when speaking of their diminished numbers in autumn, he remarks that Mr. Cordeaux has noticed that in Lincolnshire, during the months of August and September 1866, the Whimbrels were seen in small parties, passing overhead at a considerable height, constantly repeating their call-note and flying in a south or south-westerly direction. Mr. Cordeaux also states, from his observation of the bird in the same county, that the Whimbrel is far more of a land-bird than the Curlew, feeding almost exclusively in marshes, and