

ÆGIALITIS MINOR.

Little Ringed Plover.

- Charadrius minor*, Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. ii. p. 324.
——— *fluviatilis*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 422.
——— *curnicus*, Beseke, Vög. Kurl., p. 66.
——— *hiaticula*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 144?
——— *intermedius*, Ménét. Catal., p. 53?
Ægialitis fluviatilis, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 549.
Ægialites curnicus, Keys. et Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 71.
——— *minor*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 558.

It appears to me to be quite impossible to determine with any degree of certainty what is the correct synonymy of this little Plover, and, consequently, which of the various specific appellations that have been assigned to it should be retained. Temminck, Vieillot, De Selys-Longchamps, Boie, Bailly, Yarrell, and other authors adopt that of *minor*, applied to it by Meyer, while Keyserling and Blasius, Blyth, and G. R. Gray regard the bird as identical with the *curnicus* of Beseke, and therefore employ that name on the score of priority. By Bechstein and Brehm it is termed *fluviatilis*; and it may possibly be the *intermedius* of Ménériés. The subject being thus involved in confusion, I have considered it best to employ the term *minor*, by which the bird is most generally known.

In the British Islands the Little Ringed Plover is but seldom seen, and must be regarded as a merely accidental visitor during its periodical migrations, nearly every instance of its occurrence having taken place in spring and autumn. On the continent of Europe it is numerous, and there, as well as in India and China, it is a regular migrant. From the vast powers of flight possessed by all the Plovers, we must not be surprised at learning that it is also found in Africa, being plentiful on the Nile and in the provinces of Algeria and Constantine. At this moment I have not only English specimens before me, but others from Germany, some from Egypt (kindly forwarded to me by Edgar Larking, Esq.), from India (sent by the late Lieut. R. C. Beavan), and also from China. It will be seen, therefore, that our Little Ringed Plover enjoys a most extensive range. Many of the habits of this species resemble those of the common *Æ. hiaticula*; but it differs in appearance when on the wing. Although frequently found on the shingly beaches of the coast, it is on the whole less maritime than its congener; for it rather affects the sides of inland waters, ponds, and reservoirs, and frequently ascends high up those rivers which rise far in the interior of the country, whether it be in Europe or India, in which latter country it is frequently seen on the sides of the numerous great tanks.

With the exception of Britain, the Little Ring-Dotterel breeds in all the countries above mentioned, depositing its four freckled eggs either on the bare shingle or among the scanty herbage growing in the situations it affects.

Mr. Harting tells me that, when on the wing, this species may be readily distinguished from the common one by the absence of white from the basal portions of the secondaries—a circumstance which renders it less conspicuous and more like the ordinary Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleuca*. Little difference is observable in the size or colouring of the sexes; but I observe that one of the specimens forwarded to me by Mr. Larking, a female, has the bands on the crown and the crescentic mark on the chest but faintly indicated, and of a brown hue, instead of black.

The following notes were taken from a specimen sent to me in the flesh by Mr. Harting, by whom it had been killed at Kingsbury Reservoir, near Hendon, in Middlesex, on the 30th of August 1864. Several of the common species were on the side of the reservoir at the same time; and Mr. Harting observed that its note was not a double whistle like the note of that bird, but was similar to that of the Common Sandpiper. The thick and fleshy ring round the eye was of a bright straw-yellow; the bill black, with a tinge of fleshy yellow at the base of the under mandible; the eyes black, full, and round; the outer tail-feathers, instead of being wholly white (as is generally the case in the ordinary species), had a dusky spot on their inner webs; the primaries are of a uniform blackish brown, with the exception of the shaft of the outer one, which is white; while in the larger species the shafts of all the primaries are white.

The weight of this specimen, a young male bird of the year in capital condition, was $1\frac{1}{4}$ oz. and 65 grains, while that of a female of the Common Ring-Dotterel shot the same day was $2\frac{1}{4}$ oz.

I have stated in general terms that this bird enjoys a most extensive range; but it may be as well, per-