

*medius*) never breed at Shoreham now, or have not done so for many years. On the wing the difference is very apparent; the small kind are always dark on the back, the large light."

The next is from Mr. Harting, no mean authority on the subject:—"I have compared the Ring-Plovers received from you on the 24th ult. with several specimens of *Charadrius hiaticula* obtained from different localities and at different seasons; and although there certainly is a difference between them in respect of size and plumage, still it is a question whether that difference is sufficient to constitute a species.

"I was inclined to believe, at one time, that an examination of a sufficient number of examples would establish the fact that we had two species of Ringed Plovers under one name, *Charadrius hiaticula*; but I am now led to think otherwise, for the following reasons:—first, a character which was supposed to be constant (viz. the outer tail-feather) has proved to be not so, some of the birds obtained on the 24th ult. having the outer tail-feather on each side pure white, and others showing a dusky spot on the inner web of the same feather; secondly, the conviction that great allowance should be made for age, especially when we consider that the young of *C. hiaticula* are hatched as early as the first week of April and as late as the first week of June; thirdly, the effect which climate, soil, and food may have upon the young, according to the latitude in which they are hatched—those which are reared in the north (arguing from what has been observed of other species, for example *Alauda arvensis*) being generally finer and stronger birds than those reared further south.

"Were the peculiarities noticed in this case considered sufficient to constitute them a species, it would be necessary, upon the same principle, to separate the *Saricola ananthe* and some others.

"The question would then arise, 'Where is the line between species and variety to be drawn?' in other words, 'What constitutes a species?'—a question which is not easily answered."

Touching this subject, Mr. Robert Gray, in his 'Birds of the West of Scotland,' remarks:—"The variation in the size of this species has been a source of much perplexity to me. In the spring-time I have shot so many much smaller than the Ringed Plover which breeds with us that I have long thought, seeing they only appear in spring, that they must belong to a southern race.

From the above passage it is evident that the smaller Dottrel visits Scotland; and that the other one also does, I am certain; for the largest and finest skins I have in my collection were taken from specimens killed in Orkney and sent to me by the late Mr. J. H. Dunn.

Speaking of the habits of *Ægialitis hiaticula*, Mr. Gray goes on to state:—"I have nowhere been more interested with this bird than in the Outer Hebrides, a district throughout which it abounds at all seasons of the year. Towards evening in the month of September, when walking along the sandy bays of Benbecula, I have been startled with its cry, even after the sun had gone down and left all in comparative darkness. This note fell upon the ear with a strange effect as the flowing waves came seething up on the dry sand and disturbed the sleeping birds. That part of the coast being but little visited, the little Plovers were exceedingly tame and fearless, allowing me to walk within a few feet of them. Often I imagined that they met me in my walks, and alighted in wonderment near their extraordinary visitor. On several occasions indeed, I observed them halt in their flight and sit down on the sandy expanse right in front, saluting me with a gentle whistle. On very warm evenings in autumn I have frequently been very much interested in watching the Ringed Plovers on the Girvan shore, feeding on sandhoppers. The numbers of these brisk little creatures living in the dry sand, and keeping up an animated dance for hours along some miles of the beach between Girvan and Turnberry, must have been immense, the line of high-water mark appearing as if covered with a dense smoke. On walking, indeed, into the midst of these countless myriads of jumping crustaceans, the noise is like that of a pelting hail-shower. Here the little Plovers soon finish their evening meal; and it is extremely amusing to see them catch their restless prey, and swallow them hurriedly, as they touch the ground."

With regard to the bird in Norfolk, Mr. Stevenson says:—"The Ringed Plover, one of our most interesting indigenous species, may be said to possess, at least in Norfolk and Suffolk, two distinct phases of existence, being found throughout the breeding-season not only on the coast but on the great sandy warrens in the interior, where its sprightly actions and melodious notes enliven those dreary wastes from about the middle of March up to the end of August, when young and old again retire to the sea-shore and the mouths of our tidal rivers till the time once more arrives for this strange inland migration."

The eggs of the Ringed Plover, which are generally four in number, are deposited in a hollow on the bare ground, and, according to Yarrell, are of a pale buff or cream-colour, spotted and streaked with ash-blue, and are one inch and five lines long by one inch and half a line in breadth.

The figures in the accompanying Plate represent old and young birds, about the size of life. The beautiful plant is the Sea-pea (*Pisum maritimum*).