

ÆGIALITIS HIATICULA.

Ringed Plover.

Charadrius hiaticula, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 66.

——— *torquatus*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 28.

Ægialitis septentrionalis, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 548.

——— *hiaticula*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 558.

Hiaticula annulata, G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 1840, p. 65.

——— *torquata*, G. R. Gray, List of Spec. in Brit. Mus. p. 68.

THE Ringed Plover is so generally dispersed along the sea-coasts of the British Islands that it would be difficult to say on which of them it could not be found. Mr. Rodd describes it as “generally distributed along the shores of Cornwall, and very often associated with Dunlins; breeds early; eggs found in Scilly in April.” From this locality, the most south-westerly of our counties, it is found throughout England and Scotland to the Orkneys; it also frequents the Western Islands and Ireland. It is a stationary species, and is to be met with both in winter and summer. It usually breeds on the shingly portion of the beaches, but frequently along the sides of the larger rivers, and, moreover, often proceeds to the wastes and warrens of the interior, where it may find any attractive spot whereon to deposit its eggs and rear its young. The other countries it inhabits are Iceland and Europe generally, to within the Arctic circle; and it crosses over the Mediterranean to Africa, occurring there as far south at least as Mozambique and Walvisch Bay. I am rather surprised that it is not included by Jerdon in his ‘Birds of India,’ nor by Mr. Holdsworth in his ‘List of Ceylonese Birds;’ neither does Mr. Swinhoe appear to have seen it in China. On reference to my ‘Handbook to the Birds of Australia,’ it will be found that I possess a specimen killed at Port Stevens, in New South Wales; it would be somewhat strange, therefore, if it should ultimately prove that the Ringed Plover does not inhabit either India or China: it must surely be at least a casual visitor to those countries.

An opinion is pretty general that a second species of Ringed Plover arrives on our southern coast in spring, and either remains to breed here, or proceeds to regions further north for this purpose. On this head I have received letters from various correspondents, some assuring me that the smaller bird is quite distinct from the larger, while others express their doubts about regarding it as such. The specimens of the old and young Ringed Plover figured on the accompanying Plate, were taken from examples of the larger and indigenous bird collected by myself on the Great Shingle at Dungeness Point on the coast of Kent, June 12th, 1864; and as the drawing was made on the spot the colouring of the soft parts of both may be depended upon. I must remark that although there were several broods on the shingle of the same age as those I have figured, which had not left the shell more than a day or two, there were others running about that were nearly fledged and able to fly, clearly showing that some of the paired birds had incubated their eggs at an earlier period. I have, from time to time, weighed many of the old birds of this species, and taken admeasurements of a still larger number, in order to ascertain the comparative weight and size of the sexes, but without any satisfactory result, some of the males being heavier and larger than the females, and *vice versa*. The largest bird proved to be a female; but this large size did not appear to be constant in that sex. Mr. Harting also kindly weighed for me six specimens shot by himself at Pagham Harbour on the 3rd of December, 1867. These six birds were evidently adult, as they had black rings round their necks, and the crescentic marks on their chests. The following are the weights and the colouring of the outer tail-feathers (which was supposed to be a character of importance) of the six specimens in question:—

	Weight.	Colour of outer tail-feathers.		Weight.	Colour of outer tail-feathers.
No. 1. Female	1160 grains.	White.	No. 4. Male	1080 grains.	Dark spot.
No. 2. Male	1120 „	White.	No. 5. Male	1030 „	Dark edge.
No. 3. Female	1100 „	White.	No. 6. Male	980 „	Faint spot.

Difference between heaviest and lightest = 180 grains.

The weight of the little species or race, as the case may be, of the Ringed Plover, taking the average of four specimens sent to me in the flesh by Mr. Swaysland on the 23rd of September 1867, was two ounces; but one of them weighed a quarter of an ounce more, and another as much less. As the question respecting there being one or two species of these Ringed Plovers on our coasts is still occupying the attention of British ornithologists, I shall here insert two notes I have received on the subject. The first is from Mr. George Dawson, of Brighton, who says, “with regard to these birds being only a *smaller race* of the larger, I do *not*, at *present certainly*, agree, because you may see a flock of sixty of the small ones at Shoreham at the time the larger birds have young ones; both kinds keep distinct; and the small (which I call *Charadrius*