

ÆGIALOPHILUS CANTIANUS.

Kentish Plover.

- Charadrius cantianus*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Suppl., p. lxvi.
——— *albifrons*, Meyer, Taschenb. deutsch. Vög., tom. ii. p. 323.
——— *littoralis*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 430, tab. 23. figs. 1 & 2.
——— *Alexandrinus*, Hasselq. Reise, p. 213.
Ægialitis cantianus, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 558.
——— *albifrons*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 551.
——— *albigularis*, Brehm, ibid., p. 553.

"This little Plover," says Yarrell, in his 'British Birds,' "was first described and named by Dr. Latham in the ninth volume of his 'General History of Birds,' p. 328, from specimens sent him by Dr. Boys, which had been killed at Sandwich, in Kent, in the years 1787 and 1791, in which locality the species has several times been obtained. In May 1830 Mr. George Clayton, of Rochester, found it in pairs at Pegwell Bay and on the Sandwich flats: it has also been met with on the shelly bank, towards Sandhurst Castle and Deal, whence I have seen specimens. The Ringed Plover is common in the same localities; but the Kentish Plovers may be readily distinguished when on the ground by their smaller size. Though they mix together when feeding, Mr. Clayton says the two species do not fly in company." "The egg," Mr. Yarrell states, "is correctly figured by Mr. Hewitson, in his well known work the 'Eggs of British Birds.' I possess two eggs of this species, given me by Dr. Pitman, obtained with others on the Sussex coast; these are one inch and three lines in length by eleven lines in breadth, of a yellowish stone-colour, spotted and streaked with black."

The above is probably the earliest record of this interesting species; and I have considered it only just to the late Mr. Yarrell to repeat the information he has given to the world.

Mr. Stevenson, in his 'Birds of Norfolk,' after recapitulating some of the instances of its occurrence as stated by Yarrell, Mr. Clarke, of Saffron Walden, the late Mr. Hoy, and Mr. J. H. Gurney, proceeds to say:—"I have not had the opportunity of examining specimens of this bird in the flesh; but Mr. Gould describes the bill and legs as hard and black, whilst the same parts in the Ringed Plover are pulpy and yellow; and in all plumages the former may be recognized by the white of the breast extending upwards to the chin without any interruption, which is not the case with the Ringed Plover."

I am somewhat surprised that Mr. Stevenson has never had fresh Norfolk examples of this bird, since from 1828 until within the last few years I have been in the habit of receiving specimens along with other shore-birds direct from Yarmouth, where I know they had been killed by the gunners who eke out a living by shooting birds for the London collectors.

If we compare the Kentish Plover with the Ringed Plover (or the Ringed Dottrel, as it is more frequently called), we find certain structural differences which, although they may be slight, doubtless have some influence over their habits and economies. On this head I may repeat here what I said in my 'Handbook to the Birds of Australia,' published in 1865:—"In accordance with the spirit of minute subdivision, which now pervades all branches of natural science, I have for a long time considered that the small Plovers hitherto comprised in the genus *Ægialites*, of which the *Æ. hiaticula* is the type, required a further subdivision; I therefore propose the term above given (*Ægialophilus*) for the *Æ. cantianus* of Europe, and to associate with it the *Æ. ruficapillus* of Australia. There are many other species of this form, all or nearly all of which have black bills and long legs, and are less banded with black on the under surface than the members of the genus *Ægialites*. They have a different note, are nimble of foot, and affect situations bordering the open sea."

The Kentish Plovers have longer legs and shorter toes, which are black and hard, instead of the former being pulpy and the latter yellow as in the Ringed Plovers; their eyes also are larger when compared with the size of the body. The situations the two birds affect when they come to us to breed are also very different, the Ringed Plovers dispersing themselves over shingly beds and sides of rivers, while the Kentish Plover keeps to the sea-shore, and deposits its eggs above high-water mark and out of the reach of the spray. Those who have seen the two birds alive in their native haunts cannot have failed to observe the difference of sites chosen by the two birds. The note of the Kentish Plover also is markedly different from the plaintive pipe of the Ringed Plovers, being more harsh and chattering. If they have not all been ruthlessly destroyed since the month of June, 1846, the reader may go to the little town of Lydd, on the coast of Kent, and thence to the shingles, and observe for himself both the species above mentioned.