ANTHUS SPINOLETTA.

Vinous Pipit.

Alauda spinoletta, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 288.
Anthus spinoletta, Bonap. Syn. Birds of Am., p. 90.
—— *aquaticus*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iii. p. 745.
—— *montanus*, Koch, Baier. Zool., tom. i. p. 172?

The Pipits with vinous-coloured breasts which have for some years past been killed in England, have been a sad puzzle to our ornithologists—some being of opinion that they are a variety of *Anthus obscurus*, and others that they pertain to a distinct species; more than one regard them as identical with the *Anthus ludovicianus* of America, while others believe them to be examples of the *A. spinoletta* of Linnæus (*A. aquaticus* of Temminck). In this latter opinion I coincide; hence it becomes necessary that I should give a figure of the bird, and all the information I can respecting it. On the 25th of January 1860, Mr. Murray A. Matthews, of Merton College, Oxford, wrote to me as follows:—"Are there two species of Rock-Pipit in this country, of which one has hitherto remained unnoticed? or is the continental Rock-Pipit (*A. aquaticus*, Temm.) merely a permanent variety of the ordinarily olive-coloured Pipit (*A. obscurus*) met with with us? I possess a Rock-Pipit shot at Torquay, which appears to me to be slightly larger than the bird commonly seen, and of a rich vinous tint on the breast. I thought at first this might be a very old bird, in an advanced state of plumage, and was careful therefore to shoot, last spring, during the breeding-season (when the birds would certainly be in their finest state), a number of specimens for comparison; but none of those I then shot bore any resemblance in the tint of their plumage to my Torquay specimen. The ordinary Rock-Pipit, so abundant on our coasts, is known at once by its sombre olive-green colouring, and by the well-defined gorget of spots on its throat. In the Torquay specimen there is hardly any trace of this gorget-marking."

In December 1864, the Messrs. Pratt, of Brighton, sent for my inspection two vinous-breasted birds, one of which, killed near Worthing, is represented in the front figure of my Plate. Some time after this, Mr. Edward T. Booth wrote to Mr. Bond:—"Mr. Swaysland has seen ten of these birds this season; of that number he obtained eight one morning, and two more in three or four mornings afterwards, between the 14th and 20th of March 1867, at a small salt-pool just inside the sea-beach at Portslade, near Brighton. Some of them were seen crossing the sea, and pitching on the grass near the pool. They were by no means shy, but would not permit a nearer approach than about thirty or forty yards. A great number of other Pipits were crossing at the same time, all of which appeared to be the Meadow-Pipit." Two of these specimens having been sent to Mr. Bond, that gentleman allowed me to inspect them, and I found they were precisely similar to the *Anthus spinoletta* of the Continent: one had the breast strongly suffused with vinous; in the other this tint was not so extensive, the flanks being spotted with brown, from which we may infer that it was a younger bird, or one beginning to assume its summer plumage; for it is believed that the vinous tint is a characteristic of the *A. spinoletta* at that season; and it seems to me that these birds must be distinct from *A. obscurus*, because we do know that the examples of the latter species so generally distributed over this country retain the spotted plumage throughout the year. I suspect that most of the Pipits of the northern hemisphere differ in the same manner as the Wagtails, and that, if we admit *Motacilla Yarrelli* to be distinct from *M. alba*, and *Budytes Rayi* from *B. flava*, we must also regard the present bird, *A. spinoletta*, as distinct from *A. obscurus*.

According to Bailly, the *A. spinoletta* passes much of its time and breeds on the mountains—a habit so different from that of *A. obscurus* that his account, extracted from his 'Ornithologie de la Savoie,' tends greatly to prove that it is a distinct species.

"This bird is common, at all seasons of the year, both in Switzerland and in Savoy. During winter it frequents the wet meadows, the marshes, and the unfrozen springs of the lower portions of both those countries, and about the end of March or beginning of April ascends the mountains and resorts to the most sterile plateaux, fields, heaths, and stony places in the neighbourhood of water, often above the forest-region. It generally proceeds in small companies, and ascends a short distance every day as the snows disappear from its favourite breeding-places. It pairs at the beginning of May; and the united couples immediately begin the construction of their nests. These are to be found on all parts of the mountains, even near to the line of perpetual congelation—sometimes in declivities, at others on the plateaux, but nearly always in the most arid and desert places. They are placed on the ground, under stones, sometimes in clefts in the rock, but oftener in the grass, beneath the bilbery, *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, whortleberry, or some creep-