

THE BIRDS OF KENYA AND UGANDA.

PART III. VOL. 2.

FAMILY CHARADRIIDÆ.

This Family consists of the Plovers and certain outlying members which show a close affinity to what we generally refer to as Plovers; these are the Stilt, Avocet, and Oystercatcher. The Plovers may conveniently be divided up into sub-families as follows:

Charadriinæ (including Ringed, Lesser, Sand, Grey, etc.)

Vanellinæ, large plovers of the lapwing-type, many bearing spurs on the wings, and some with wattles. The Stilt is included here.

Recurvirostrinæ, for the Avocet; and

Hamatopodinæ, containing the so-called Oystercatchers.

SUB-FAMILY CHARADRIINÆ.

This sub-family has been divided into several genera and sub-genera and those who desire to recognise some of the sub-genera created will find reference to these under the species as they are dealt with. Personally, I prefer to maintain most in the comprehensive genus CHARADRIUS. Many of the species seen in Eastern Africa are migrants from the north and occur here during the winter months. (A few may remain over from one winter to the following but the majority move north in the spring). The remainder are resident and breed; some few are local migrants.

CHARADRIUS HIATICULA TUNDRÆ, Lowe. SIBERIAN RINGED PLOVER.

Ref. Lowe, Bull. Brit. Ornith. Club. XXXVI, p. 7, 1915.

Type loc. Yenesei Valley.

DISTRIBUTION:

Occurs on the margins of the lakes in Kenya and Uganda, on temporary swamps and pans, dams, and often on larger rivers, and along the coast.

DESCRIPTION: Male and female, adult; winter.

Forehead white followed by a blackish band; a narrow blackish line at the base of the upper mandible which is continuous with the blackish lores and blackish-brown ear-coverts.* A white line runs above

*It is possible that some mature birds will be found to have these dark areas jet black when about to go north in March or April.

and posterior to the eye, a white spot under the eye; chin and throat white, this colour is carried back to the upper mantle and forms a ring by meeting its fellow of the opposite side; below the white throat is a black band narrow in the middle and widening out on either side of the chest (†); crown of head, mantle, scapulars, back, rump and middle upper tail-coverts and lesser and median wing-coverts ashy grey-brown, darker on the upper mantle below white collar; feathers on side of back and upper tail-coverts white; greater wing-coverts ashy-grey with white tips; secondaries mostly white inwardly, with an increasing amount of dark ashy-grey on the outer webs, tips narrowly white; primaries dark ashy-brown on the outer webs, whitish on inner, shafts of outermost three sub-terminally white. Tail: outer pair white, remainder with increasing amount of ashy-brown mostly on the inner web, shading to blackish subterminally, ends white; central pair ashy-brown with narrow white tip. The whole of the underside to under tail-coverts white. Bill, horn-brown at tip, basally yellow; eyes brown; legs and feet yellowish. Wings, 118-130 mm.

IMMATURE :

Differs from the above in having the ear-coverts and breast band hardly different to the crown and mantle, only slightly darker; the frontal band and throat tinged with buff. Mantle feathers with pale tips.

This race is said to differ from the nominate western form by being darker and smaller. Bannerman gives the wing measurements of the typical race as 121-132 mm., thus very very slightly larger, and we find both dark and light birds in a series from eastern Africa. It is possible that we do get both forms, through Meinertzhagen suggests not. The fact is that winter birds are very difficult to differentiate. Friedmann records the typical race from Lake Edward, so why not further south?

HABITS :

This species is to be found on most of the lakes, swamps, temporary pans and dams, and on the larger rivers in Kenya and Uganda, and along the sea board of Kenya, but usually only during the winter months. Some birds however, most immature, remain over until the second spring migration. Dates of arrival and departure are as follows : arrival, beginning of October; departure, end of April. One usually finds these birds in flocks when they occur on lakeside or seashore; on smaller waters they are seen in lesser numbers, often solitary. In the early morning and later in the afternoon one sees them in parties working along the edge of the wavelets that wash the shore. Here they feed on various aquatic insects and their larvæ, that of the *Eristalis*

†This chest band, in fully plumaged mature individuals is not so constricted, but is of nearly equal width: April birds.



Adult.
Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*, Gmel.).

Juvenile.

Fly being one of their chief food supplies. They also take other insects, small mollusca and crustacea. As one walks them up, they rise in a body and give utterance to the familiar cry which one knows so well when shore-shooting at "Home," "tooli-tooli" and "pen-y-et." They go off in a wide circle, showing first their dark upper side with the white bar on the wing, then the white undersurface, each bird turning in time with the leader. At noonday one sees them resting on some spit of land jutting out into the water, or on some sand-bank. They stand, with head depressed on the body, usually on one leg, dozing. They do not breed in this country.

CHARADRIUS DUBIUS CURONICUS, Gmel. **LITTLE RINGED PLOVER.**

Ref.: Gmelin, Syst. Nat., 1, 692, 1789.

Type locality: Courland.

DISTRIBUTION:

Kenya and Uganda. On the shores of the larger lakes and at the coast.

DESCRIPTION: Male and female, winter.

Fore-part of head and ear-coverts black, the forehead crossed by a white frontal band; a white spot under the eye; a white streak above and behind the eye, often continued in the fore region to the posterior edge of the black on the fore-crown; chin and throat white, the white extending back to circle the lower neck; this is edged above and below with black, which colour crosses the chest as a broad band, slightly narrower in the centre; the remainder of the underside white; hind part of crown above the white neck-band, mantle, scapulars, centre of back, rump and upper tail-coverts, wing-coverts, lesser and median ashy-grey-brown with very narrow paler tips; greater coverts ashy-grey-brown with narrow white tips; secondaries mostly ashy-grey with increasing white on the inner webs and narrow white tips; primaries dark ashy-grey, white tipped, the first with white shaft, remainder brown. Tail: central two pairs ashy-grey-brown shading to blackish at ends and pale tipped, rest with increasing amount of white with reduction of dark areas to blackish spots on the inner web, outer pair pure white. Bill black, base lower yellow; eyes brown; legs and feet yellowish-flesh. Wings, 108-120 mm.

IMMATURE:

Dark line from bill to ear-coverts ashy-brown as the breast band, hind-crown mantle and wing-coverts, all these except the ear-coverts with sandy-buff edging and whitish tips to those of the wing. Frontal band and stripe above and behind the eye buffy; flight feathers more

white tipped than in the mature. Bill horn-brown, paler at the base of lower mandible; eyes brown; legs and feet ochre.

HABITS :

The Lesser Binged Plover is a migrant from eastern Europe arriving in this country about October and departing in April. It is not by any means as plentiful as its larger cousin and in distribution is more restricted being found sparingly on the inland waters, except on Lake Rudolf where it is common, and along the seaboard where it congregates in numbers, more particularly the coast from Lamu to Kismayu, and very plentiful on the Juba River. In general habits it resembles the larger species. Though somewhat alike, this species can be identified by its smaller size, more slender build and relatively longish tail, and when in flight one at once detects the absence of the white wing-bar and the darker wings.

They do not breed in their winter quarters. The localities in which we have records of the species are: Lake Albert, Lake Rudolf, Kavirondo Gulf, Baringo, Lake Nakuru, Lake Naivasha, and the coast of Kenya.

CHARADRIUS (LEUCOPOLIUS) MARGINATUS TENELLUS
Hartl. LITTLE WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER.

Ref. : Hartlaub, Fauna Madagascar, p. 72, 1861.

Type locality : Madagascar.

DISTRIBUTION :

The coast line of Kenya.

DESCRIPTION :

Frontal band white; a narrow grey line at base of bill passing through the lores and becoming black before the eye; posterior to the frontal band a greyish area to the mid-ocular line; a pale whitish line above and posterior to the eye; chin and throat white, this colour extending back to the hind-neck and forming a rather ill-defined ring with its fellow of the opposite side; sides of chest tinged with pale ashy and washed with rusty colour, the whole of the underside white with a very slight buffy tinge to the sides of the body; hind-crown pale ashy-grey strongly washed with rusty, especially above the hind-collar; mantle, scapulars, lesser coverts, centre of back, rump, and upper tail-coverts pale ashy-grey, darker on the last, the first two areas washed with rusty, more especially on the scapulars; median wing-coverts ashy-grey with pale edges; secondaries similarly coloured but with white edges and white tips; primaries ashy-grey, darker at the tips and paler on the inner webs, shafts white; sides of rump and upper tail-coverts white, central upper tail-coverts ashy-grey; tail feathers: central pairs dark ashy-grey pale tipped and tinged rusty on margins, others white. Bill, black; eyes brown; legs and feet ochre-green. Wings, 93-103 mm.



Female.
Little White-fronted Plover (*Charadrius (Leucopoliis) marginatus tenellus*, Hartl.).
Male.

IMMATURE:

Frontal white band narrower, no blackish bar beyond; loreal streak brownish; upper surface ashy-grey with only a trace of the rufescent wash.

JUVENILE:

Unknown to me.

HABITS:

The Little White-fronted Plover is confined to the coast-line and the sand banks of the lower Juba River. Owing to the very limited amount of collecting that has been done actually on the sea-shore, very few examples have been taken. In general habits they resemble the Ringed Plovers, but whereas the latter keep in bunches or flocks, these birds occur in fair numbers in threes and fours along a stretch of beach. They are very quick in their movements and speedy when running; they dart about after insects and small crustacea all along the edge of the water, and will often rush into the water thigh-high as a wave recedes, after some elusive prey. When they are flushed they utter a low plaintive call somewhat reminiscent of that of the Ringed Plover, but not so strong and higher pitched. I have no records of its nesting habits, but the West African race is said to lay its eggs in a shallow scrape in the sand, and to cover the eggs when it leaves, as do some of the other little plovers of Africa. The eggs, said to be two in number, are not described.

**CHARADRIUS (LEUCOPOLIUS) ALEXANDRINUS PONS, Neum.
EAST AFRICAN KENTISH PLOVER.**

Ref.: Neumann, Nov. Zool., Vol. 35, 1929.

Type locality: Kismayu.

DISTRIBUTION:

The coast of Kenya north of the Tana to Jubaland.

DESCRIPTION: Male.

Forehead white, followed by a black band at about mid-point above the eyes; a black line from the base of the bill to the anterior angle of the eye; ear-coverts dusky; chin and throat white extending round the hind-neck; hinder part of crown ashy-grey-brown with a wash of rusty above the nape; the whole of the underside white with a patch of black feathers on the sides of the upper breast; mantle, scapulars and lesser wing-coverts ashy-grey-brown, slightly darker on the last; median and major coverts similar but with pale edges and white tips; secondaries ashy-brown with paler inner webs to almost white; primaries ashy-brown with paler inner webs; upper tail-coverts dark ashy-brown; tail feathers white on the outer ones, ashy-brown on the inner pairs.

Eyes brown; legs and feet greyish; bill black. Wings, 100-104 mm. Female similar but lacks the black head band and has an ashy-brown pectoral patch on sides of chest.

IMMATURE:

Very similar to the mature but without the black frontal band, this is indicated by brownish feathers, and the white forehead is tinged with buffy; the lateral pectoral patch is brownish, and there is hardly any trace of rusty wash on the hind-crown.

HABITS:

These are similar to the White-fronted Plover, but more data is required regarding nesting habits, etc.

CHARADRIUS (LEUCOPOLIUS) VENUSTUS VENUSTUS, Fisch. & Reichen. KENYA CHESTNUT-BANDED PLOVER.

Ref. Fischer and Reichenow, Jrl. f. Ornith., 1884.

Type loc. Salt Lake Nguruman, T.T.

DISTRIBUTION:

Restricted to the Soda Lakes of Kenya and Tanganyika in the Rift Valley.

DESCRIPTION: MALE.

Forehead white, extending laterally above the eye at mid-point and around the eyelids; followed by a black band at mid-crown; hind-crown ashy-grey becoming rusty at the margins and so forming a rusty-coloured streak behind and above the eyes; joining the rusty nape band is the chest band of the same colour, very often with blackish feathers present; a black line from the anterior corner of the eye to the base of the upper bill; chin and throat white, as is also the whole of the remainder of the underside; mantle, scapulars, lesser wing-coverts, back and central upper tail-coverts ashy-grey, darker on the last, with very narrow whitish tips; median and greater wing-coverts ashy-grey with pale edges and white tips; secondaries and primaries darker ashy-grey paling to whitish on the inner webs, primaries with white shafts except at tips. Eyes brown; bill black; legs and feet blackish-brown to black.

FEMALE:

Very similar to the male, but without a black head band, this being pale chestnut, and the crown with only a trace of rusty at the edges, while the breast band is also much paler chestnut.

IMMATURE:

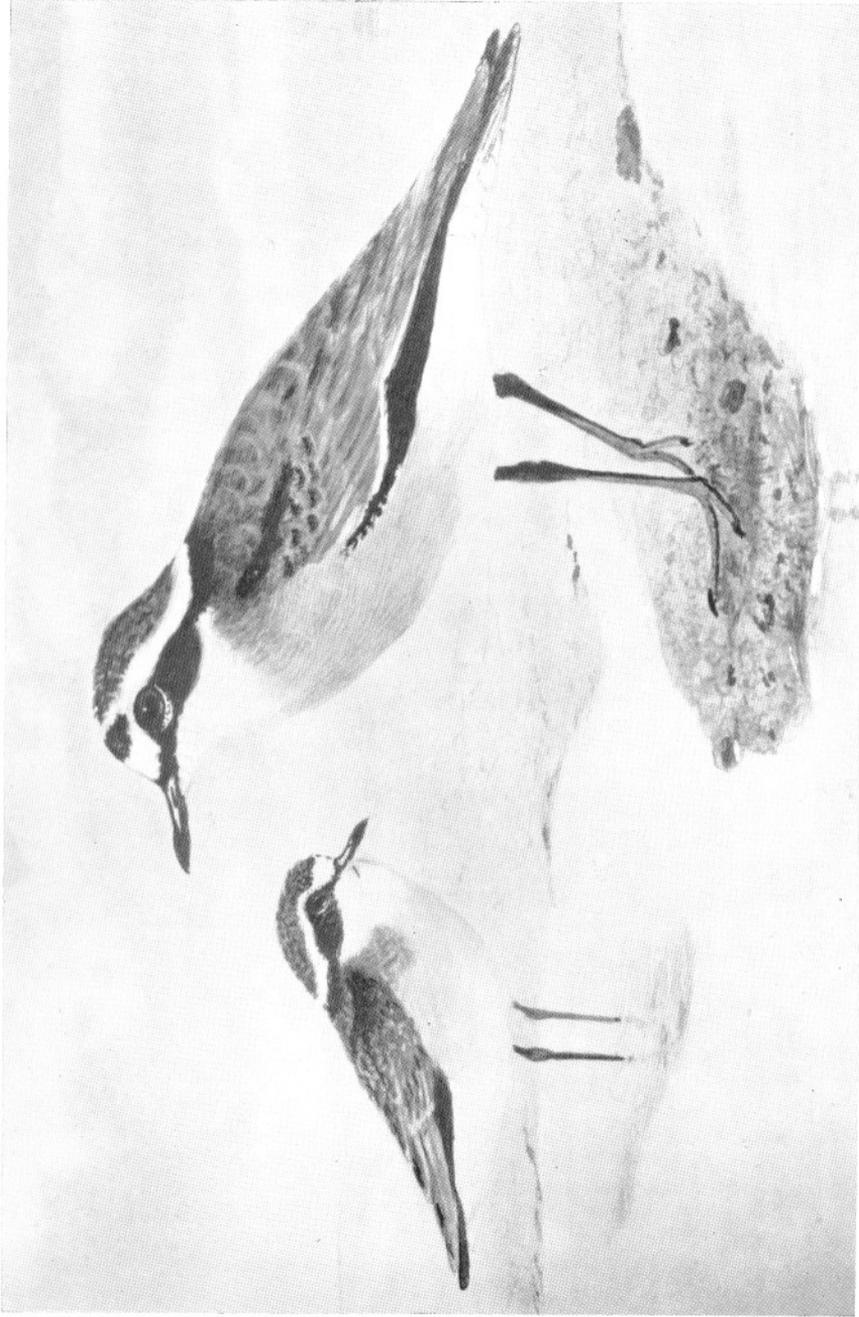
Somewhat like the female but breast band ashy-grey, narrow in the centre of breast and expanded at the sides; ear-coverts dusky.



Female.

Male.

Kenya Chestnut-banded Plover (*Charadrius (Leucopolioides) venustus venustus*, Fisch. & Reichw.).



Juvenile.

Buff-breasted Sand Plover (*Charadrius (Halenargyllus) peculiaris peculiaris*, Temm.).

Adult.

HABITS :

The restricted distribution of this little plover is in itself a very interesting thing, and taken in conjunction with the fact that the only other country in which it occurs as a geographical race is South-west Africa and Angola, one is led to speculate as to the reasons why in our country it occurs only (so far as we know) on the shores of the soda-lakes of the Rift Valley. Lake Magadi and Natron appear to be its stronghold on the eastern side of Africa. It is resident and breeds here. They feed on insects, small mollusca and crustacea. One sees them in pairs or family parties of four usually feeding along the edge of the water or basking on some sand-spit or promontory. They have the same habits as other little plovers and take a large amount of their food actually at the water's edge. They wade in the water up to their "knees" and as the little wavelets wash the shore one can observe these birds taking little jumps to avoid getting wet. Most of the food is obtained on the surface, but they also delve with their bills into the soft mud to obtain certain aquatic insects and their larvæ.

They are often seen on the soda pans where the alkalinity of the water is so strong as to cause unpleasant results to one's hands if immersed in it, yet the water does not appear to affect their feet. Nevertheless, the soda soon bleaches the plumage of these little birds, affecting principally the tail and flight feathers.

They nest on the more sandy stretches of the shore or on the lines of debris above highwater line. The nest is a shallow scrape and may be left thus, or sometimes has a few bits of grass and other debris placed in or around it. The eggs, two in number, are putty-colour in ground colour with grey submerged spots and dark superficial spots and dots of black and sepia. They are large for the size of the bird.

CHARADRIUS (HELENÆGIALUS) PECUARIUS PECUARIUS,
Temm. BUFF-BREASTED SAND PLOVER.

Ref. : Temminck, Pl. Col. livre, 31, 1823.

Type locality : Cape of Good Hope.

DISTRIBUTION :

On most of the lakes of Kenya and Uganda, and on some of the larger rivers.

DESCRIPTION : MALE, ADULT.

Forehead white, followed by a black frontal band which starts above the anterior angle of the eye, often distally and laterally edged with white; a black streak extends from the eye to the base of the upper mandible. A white streak runs from above the mid-point of the eye above the ear-coverts and circles the back of the upper neck; ear-coverts black, this colour extending back to form an almost complete

collar on the hind-neck below the white collar; chin, throat and cheeks white shading to rich cinnamon buff or sandy-rufous on the breast, sides of the body and upper abdomen, lateral pectoral region tinted with ashy-grey; centre of abdomen, vent and under tail-coverts white; top and hind part of crown ashy-brown with paler tips and fine blackish shaft line; mantle, scapulars, median wing-coverts and centre of back dark ashy-brown with wide sandy-rufous to rusty margins and tips especially marked on the long scapulars and the wing-coverts; lesser wing-coverts darker, almost blackish; secondaries ashy-brown, paler on the inner webs, and with pale edges to the outer webs and whitish tips; primaries blackish, the inner ones with white on the base of the outer webs, outer primary with a white shaft for almost its total length. Sides of rump and upper tail-coverts white; upper tail-coverts dark ashy-brown to blackish with paler tips; tail: mid pair blackish brown, next pair paler, remainder white with slight sandy tinge along middle of outer web. Bill horn-brown; eyes brown; legs and feet grey-brown or grey-green. Wings, 95-104 mm.

FEMALE:

Very like the male, but the dark areas on the head dark blackish-brown, not black, and the dark frontal band narrower; the lower surface not so sandy-rufous, but paler.

IMMATURE:

Somewhat like the female; the black frontal band almost wanting, the light coronal line buffy, the lower line brownish, undersurface white or with a faint tinge of buffy on the breast and the upperside rather more brownish and less rusty tinged though the tips of the feathers are pale edged with buff.

NESTLING:

Crown and back greyish to white mottled and spotted with dark ashy-grey, the dorsum with a dark line, and one on the wing, the dark area of the crown separated from that of the back by a white ring; undersurface white.

HABITS:

The Buff-breasted Sand Plover occurs along the coast line of Kenya from the Juba to the boundary, and is found inland, on the lakes and occasionally on the rivers, when these latter two have stretches of sand gravel, or mud banks, throughout Kenya and Uganda. One seldom finds them on waters where the reeds and papyrus come down to the water's edge. They occur in small flocks, or pairs during the nesting season. Though essentially a bird associated with the water's edge, yet one does occasionally find them on the open grass lands nearby, if the vegetation is short. They are agile and fairly tame and will continue



Three-banded Plover (*Charadrius (Afroxyechus) tricoloris*, Vieill.).

running along the water's edge at no great distance from one if they are not suddenly disturbed. They feed on crustacea, small mollusca, and insects and their larvæ (mostly aquatic).

The nesting season appears to be from March-June, August, September and also January; rather variable, but doubtless influenced by the floods following the rainy seasons. The nest is a shallow scrape in sand, mud, or pebbles. There is usually no lining, but a few pebbles may be placed round the nest. Two eggs are laid, of a stone-grey to buff finely speckled and finely lined with black and sepia all over. There is some variation in the profusion and density of the markings. The colour of the eggs makes them very difficult to see even when one is actually within a few feet of them. These birds adopt a very interesting method of protecting their eggs. When a sitting bird detects danger, she gets up, and standing over her nest, she rapidly shuffles sand and pebbles over the eggs until they are entirely covered, she then runs a little distance away and stands and calls.

Should one be on the lookout for the nests of these birds, one naturally seeks for them in the spot where the birds are seen standing or running about, but in this instance, their position is deliberately misleading. A brooding bird is most difficult to detect; it sits low in the nest, with head drawn in, and the colour of the upper side so blends with the surroundings that one cannot pick it out. The young in down are equally cryptically coloured. One may see a couple being led about by their parents, and one notes the white underside and comparatively long legs of the youngsters; try to get near them and the parents will run hither and thither in a zigzag way, all the while uttering their warning call, and perhaps one will simulate disablement and flutter along the ground. Even if one's attention has not been distracted by the parents and the place where the young were seen carefully noted, search in that spot is often unrewarded. The youngsters have crouched down in some slight depression or perhaps just where they stood, and their small rounded bodies and round heads separated by the white collar, have become merely two rounded mottled stones, exactly similar to pebbles in the vicinity!

CHARADRIUS (AFROXYECHUS) TRICOLLARIS TRICOLLARIS,
Viell. THREE-BANDED PLOVER.

Ref.: Viellot, N. Dict. d'Hist., XXVII, 1818.

Type locality: Capetown.

DISTRIBUTION:

On most of the waters of Kenya and Uganda, and on the coast-line of the former.

DESCRIPTION: MALE, ADULT.

Forehead white, the white continues back over the eye and circling round the crown meets the line of the opposite side; lores, cheeks and

ear-coverts ashy-grey, this same colour extending back to the nape of the neck where it shades into blackish distally; chin and throat white not sharply defined, but shading into the grey on the side of the head; upper breast crossed by three bands, a narrow black one which is continued up to the hind-neck, a white one which runs up to the hind-neck followed by a wide black band which ends in the latero-pectoral region; the rest of the underside including the under tail-coverts white; top of crown deep black-brown; mantle, scapulars, centre of back, rump and upper tail-coverts dark ashy-brown with olive tinge; lesser wing-coverts similar, those on margin with white tips; median and greater coverts darker ashy-olive-brown with paler edges and white tips; primary coverts same with conspicuous white tips; secondaries slightly darker also white-tipped; primaries: outer three black-brown, rest not so dark and with white tips; sides of back, rump and upper tail-coverts white; tail: mid-pair ashy-olive-grey, darker towards the ends; the next brownish with white ends, while the remainder are mostly white with black bars. Bill, black at tip, basally reddish; eyes light brown; legs and feet ochre-yellow or yellowish-flesh. Wings, 100-113 mm.

FEMALE:

Very like the male but black areas more brownish, crown not so dark.

IMMATURE:

Differs from the adult in that the forehead is mostly greyish, the throat tinged with grey, the first dark chest-band incomplete, the second one with white tips to the blackish feathers; the feathers of the crown, mantle, scapulars and tail are tipped with sandy-buff or ochreous; the end of the tail and long scapulars with incomplete ochreous cross bars. The actual downy tips are retained for quite a long time at the ends of the tail feathers, the long scapulars and those of the crown.

JUVENILE:

The downy plumage of this plover is very similar to that of *C. pecuarius*, but is on the whole rather darker and more boldly mottled.

HABITS:

The Three-collared Plover is found throughout Uganda and Kenya, including the seashore of the latter. It is much more widespread than is the Sand Plover, but it does not occur in flocks. They are usually seen in pairs or family parties, and very often in localities where one would not expect to find such birds; for example, by a small water-hole in a semi-arid area, on little streams at high altitudes up to 9000 ft., on small dams, and so on. They are commonest, however, on the shores of the larger lakes. One can recognise these birds at once by the

double black collar, but even if this is not visible, one notices the long tail and wings, these being proportionately longer than in any of the other plovers. Their flight is unlike that of other species, is rather more jerky, and quivering just before alighting and in this they recall to mind this aspect in the flight of the Common Sand-piper. They feed on terrestrial and aquatic insects and their larvæ, worms, crustacea and small mollusca. One occasionally finds them on the dumping grounds outside townships, also on manure heaps and in cattle bomas, they here feed on the maggots of flies. When the open grass plains have been burnt off, one may see these birds in twos and threes scattered over the area, feeding on disabled insects which have been scorched by the flames. Such a place is merely a temporary feeding ground, and may be situated miles from water. Water of some sort is usually found in the habitat of these birds and where this is present there the birds will breed. Along the coast it is no uncommon sight to see these plover perched on the roots of the mangrove trees. The nesting season varies with the locality. In Uganda and the Lake Victoria region we observed eggs and young from March to June, in Nairobi and Ukamba in May and September, at the coast in August. The nest is a shallow scrape with no, or very little, lining, not very far from water, but usually above the high-water level. I have once found a nest on ploughed land some twenty feet from a stream.

The clutch consists of two, rarely three eggs, buff to greyish in ground colour with numerous fine lines and scrawls of sepia and black, very often concentrated at the largest diameter. Average size 32×28 mm. I have no records of the incubation period. The parents are, like other plovers, very concerned for the welfare of eggs or young. They adopt various methods to distract one's attention, that of disablement being commonly resorted to. One seldom observes these birds on the nest, for at the sign of danger the sitting bird will rise and run some distance from the nest before making its presence known by its sharp piping call like "peeë" uttered at intervals. The hen will sit close when the eggs are due to hatch, and at such times is reluctant to leave and if dislodged will remain near the nesting site.

A very useful method of finding the young and nest of this species is to use a dog which has been trained for the purpose. Whereas the parent birds will go a long way from either the eggs or chicks, when humans approach, yet when disturbed by a dog, the parents will actually face it up and with ruffled plumage and dependent wings will rush at the intruder, often flying straight at him. The dog has to be trained to exercise considerable control! The downy chick is very cryptically coloured and most difficult to find, but patience is usually rewarded, if, having located the area in which the chicks are, one retires fifty yards or so and watches carefully with field glasses, when one will presently detect them as they rise and scamper to the protection of their parents.

CHARADRIUS (CIRREPIDESMUS) MONGOLUS ATRIFRONS,
Wagl. BLACK-FRONTED SAND PLOVER.

Ref. : Wagler, Isis, 1829, col. 650.

Type locality : Bengal.

DISTRIBUTION :

A migrant from Central Asia to the coast line of Kenya during winter months.

DESCRIPTION : Male and female, winter.

Forehead and superciliary line white; an ashy-grey streak from the lower lores to below the eye and the upper ear-coverts; the whole of the underside from chin to under tail-coverts pure white, with an ashy-grey latero-pectoral patch; crown, nape, hind-neck, mantle, scapulars, back and centre of rump ashy-grey with paler tips; lesser wing-coverts darker ashy-grey with narrow darker shaft stripe; median and greater coverts ashy-grey with paler margins and whitish tips; secondaries : outer ones ashy-grey with narrow white border and tips, inner ones with most of the outer-web white with an ashy line, inner webs ashy; primaries : outer four brownish-black with white shafts for greater length, and paler inner webs, remainder conspicuously white on the greater part of the outer web, black-brown on inner web and white tipped. Central upper tail feathers ashy-grey with white ends, lateral ones white; tail : outermost mostly white, remainder dark ashy-grey with paler margins and white tips. Bill black, eyes brown, legs and feet black. Wings, 120-130 mm.

The breeding plumage is not often seen in birds obtainable here, but a few examples taken late in the spring may show some indication of it, in that the breast may show some chestnut feathers and similar colour on nape and eye-stripe, and black feathers on frontal band, lores and ear-coverts. Similarly adults which have not yet changed into full winter, may retain some of the characters of the breeding dress.

HABITS :

During the summer these birds are found on the inland areas of their breeding range, Central Asia, but with us, in winter, they are confined almost entirely to the coast, a few finding their way to inland waters (Lakes Victoria, Naivasha). They associate in flocks, as many as a hundred being noted at one time, on the shores above and below Mombasa. They are recognisable in flight by the white areas of the wings, and medium size. The only other plover which has a very similar wing pattern, *C. leschenaulti*, is very much larger. They feed on crustacea, small mollusca and marine "worms." They are most active in the morning and evening, and seek their food at the waters' edge or on the sand when the tide is out. When at rest they bunch and stand in groups on some convenient sandbank, a favourite position being near some shallow or lagoon. They arrive in October and depart at the end of April.



Black-fronted Sand-Plover (Winter) (*Charadrius (Cirripidesmus) mongolus atrifrons*, Wagl.).



Greater Sand Plover (*Charadrius (Pagoa) leschenaulti*, Less.).

CHARADRIUS (PAGOA) LESCHENAULTI, Less. GREATER
SAND PLOVER.

Ref. : Lesson, Dict. Sci. Nat., XLII, 1826.

Type locality : Pondicherry.

DISTRIBUTION :

A winter migrant from Asia, frequenting the coast.

DESCRIPTION : Winter.

Forshead, supercillium and lores white; a blackish area in front of the eye, shading to dark ashy-grey below the eye and on the ear-coverts; the whole of the underside from chin to under tail-coverts white, with an ashy-grey latero-pectoral patch. In some specimens, this greyish patch extends across the breast in a narrow bar. The whole of the upper side from crown to back, and including the median wing-coverts. ashy-grey with darker shaft-lines and paler edges and tips; lesser wing-coverts darker ashy-grey, greater coverts similar but with white edges and white ends; secondaries : ashy-grey with conspicuous white on the outer webs and ends; primaries grey-black, the outermost with white shaft, the next three with partly white shaft, the remainder ashy-grey-brown with conspicuous white area on outer webs. Central rump and upper tail-coverts ashy with white border and tips, lateral rump white; tail feathers ashy-grey-brown, white ended, the outer most entirely white. Bill black, eyes brown, legs and feet grey-brown. Wings, 138-145 mm.

Males in almost full plumage have been obtained in April. They differ from the above description in that the ear-coverts, lores and a frontal band with latero-frontal white patch, are black, and the chest is light chestnut. Such birds are not often seen. In habits they resemble the previous species. Date of arrival : end of September; departure : end of April.