

NOTES ON IRISH BIRDS.

QUAIL, *Perdix Coturnix*, Lath. This species, considered migratory in England with the exception of some few individuals that winter in the south*, has of late years remained permanently in the north of Ireland, and during winter occurs in considerable numbers. Throughout this season, quails are daily exposed for sale in the town of Belfast, and several brace often exhibited together in a single shop. In stating the following particulars respecting the number of these birds shot by a sporting relative during part of one winter, all that were obtained by him within that period are not enumerated, but merely those on the days mentioned, with the "returns" of which I was favoured. On November 11th, 1834, my friend shot two and a half brace, and on the 13th two brace of Quails, and on the latter day saw altogether about seven or eight brace; on the 19th he obtained three brace. On December 10th he killed four and a half, and saw altogether about ten brace; on the 15th he bagged three birds. These were all obtained in their summer haunts in the county of Down, within six miles of Belfast. The same gentleman about the 1st of January 1835, shot four brace of Quails in one day near Larne in the county of Antrim, and saw many more: he remarks, that he never met with more of these birds when partridge shooting early in the season or in September than he has done throughout the month of December 1834; they were however considered by him to be rather more numerous than usual that winter. It must be added, that in no instance above mentioned did my friend go purposely in pursuit of these birds; he was snipe-shooting, and merely when walking from one bog to another, the Quails occurred. In the winter of 1836-37, a person of my acquaintance in one day shot ten brace of Quails in stubble-fields bordering Belfast Bay, to the north of Carrickfergus. During the winter of 1831-32, and subsequently, they have chiefly attracted the attention of my friend and myself.

PIGMY CURLEW, *Tringa subarquata*, Temm. This pretty species, characterized in the latest works of authority as a "rare visitant" to Great Britain, is one of our regular autumnal migrants to the north of Ireland. It first attracted notice here nearly twenty years ago, when an acute observer, the late John Montgomery, Esq. of Locust Lodge, distinguished the species from its congeners, and called Mr. Templeton's attention to it. Since that period, the Pigmy Curlew may be set down from observation as a regular bird of passage, chiefly occurring in the months of September and October. I have never known it to be so plentiful in Belfast Bay as during the Sep-

* Montagu and Selby.

tember of this present year, when it appeared in considerable flocks—but few are generally seen together, and not rarely it is met with singly.

Mr. H. H. Dombrain, of Dublin, informs me that he saw a few individuals of this species, and shot one at Lurgan Green, near Dundalk, at the beginning of November 1837. To the bay of Dublin the Pigmy Curlew resorts, as it does to the north-east of Ireland.

The LITTLE STINT, *Tringa minuta*, Leisl.,—which in reference to Great Britain is regarded only as a rare and occasional visitant, may, like the *T. subarquata*, be called a regular bird of passage in the north of Ireland. About the year 1823, Mr. John Montgomery saw a bird either of this species or of the allied *Tringa Temminckii* when out shooting on the extensive sands of Dundrum, in the county of Down, but from its shyness sought in vain to procure it. On Sept. 6, 1831, the first *Tr. minuta* known to me as obtained upon our coast was shot in Belfast Bay, and came into the possession of Dr. J. D. Marshall; others were subsequently killed here in the same season. My attention having since that time been particularly directed to such subjects, I find by reference to notes, that every autumn from 1831 to 1839 inclusive, with the single exception of 1835, when I was absent from home, this bird appeared in Belfast Bay, though in every instance in very small numbers. Early in September, 1837, a flock consisting of nine individuals were seen in the bay, and although very wild, were so perseveringly followed, that within a fortnight they had all fallen victims to the gun. So early as the end of July they have been met with here.

By Thomas W. Warren, Esq., of Dublin, I was favoured with a specimen of this bird, which he shot in Dublin Bay about the 1st of November, 1831.

RUFF, *Tringa pugnax*, Linn. Although I have not at present sufficient data to enable me to designate this species as a regular autumnal bird of passage to the north-east of Ireland, it may be set down as a frequent visitant at this period, when its sojourn is but of short continuance. So early as the end of August, 1828, when the first migration of snipes for the season arrived in the neighbourhood of Belfast, a few Ruffs were found associating with them—within the succeeding two months they have not unfrequently occurred. In spring too Ruffs arrayed in their nuptial garb have on a few occasions been obtained in different parts of Ireland.

Ample details on the four species here noticed are reserved for their proper place in my series of papers on the Birds of Ireland, but such facts as those brought forward seemed to call for special announcement.—W. THOMPSON, Belfast, Oct. 1839.



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