

ROCK PTARMIGAN.

† LAGOPUS RUPESTRIS, *Gmel.*

PLATE CCCI.—MALE, FEMALE, AND YOUNG.

Whilst at Labrador, I was informed by Mr. JONES that a smaller species of Ptarmigan than that called the Willow Grouse, *Lagopus Saliceti*, was abundant on all the hills around Bras d'Or, during the winter, when he and his son usually killed a great number, which they salted and otherwise preserved; and that in the beginning of summer they removed from the coast into the interior of the country, where they bred in open grounds, never, like the Willow Grouse, retreating to the wooded parts. They seldom appear at Bras d'Or until the last of the Wild Geese have passed over, or before the cold has become intense, and the plains deeply covered with snow. While about his house, they repair to the most elevated hill-tops, from which the violence of the winds has removed the snow. There they feed on the mosses and lichens attached to the rocks, as well as on the twigs and grasses scantily found in such places at that season. They keep in great packs, and when disturbed are apt to fly to a considerable distance, shifting from one hill to another often half a mile off.

Not having seen this species alive, and my drawing having been taken from specimens kindly presented to me by my friend Captain JAMES ROSS, R. N., I cannot do better than present you here with the observations of Dr. RICHARDSON, as recorded in the *Fauna Boreali-Americana*. "HUTCHINS reports that the Rock Grouse is numerous at the two extremities of Hudson's Bay, but does not appear at the middle settlements (York and Severn Factories), except in very severe seasons, when the Willow Grouse are scarce; and Captain SABINE informs us that they abound on Melville Peninsula, lat. 74° to 75°, in the summer. It arrived there in its snow-white dress on the 12th of May, 1820; at the end of that month the females began to assume their coloured plumage, which was complete by the first week in June, the change at the latter period being only in its commencement with the males. Some of the males were killed as late as the middle of June in their unaltered winter plumage. In this respect the species differs from the Willow Grouse, whose males first assume the summer colour. The Rock Grouse is found also on Melville Peninsula and the Barren Grounds, seldom going farther south in winter than latitude 63° in the interior, but descending



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Rock Ptarmigan

1 Male, in Winter. 2 Female Summer Plumage. 3 Young in August.

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon, F.R.S.E.S.

Engraved by J. J. Bowen, Philad.

along the coast of Hudson's Bay to latitude 58°, and in severe seasons still farther to the southward. It also occurs on the Rocky Mountains as far south as latitude 55°. It exists in Greenland, is common in Norway, is known in Sweden by the name of *Sno Rissa*, and is the species most frequent in the Museums of France and Italy under the name of *Tetrao Lagopus*. It is not a native of Scotland. The Rock Grouse in its manners and mode of living resembles the Willow Grouse, except that it does not retire so far into the woody country in winter. Contrary, however, to what HEARNE says, it is frequent in open woods on the borders of lakes in that season, particularly in the 65th parallel of latitude, though perhaps the bulk of the species remains on the skirts of the Barren Grounds. It hatches in June. The ground colour of the egg is, according to Captain SABINE, a pale reddish-brown, and is irregularly spotted and blotched with darker brown." Specimens in my possession, coloured as here described, average one inch and five-eighths in length, by an inch and an eighth in breadth.

TETRAO (LAGOPUS) RUPESTRIS, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 354.

ROCK GROUSE, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 610.

ROCK GROUSE, *Tetrao rupestris*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 483.

Male, $13\frac{1}{2}$, wing, $7\frac{10}{12}$.

Breeds from Labrador to the Arctic Seas. Rocky Mountains. Abundant. Migratory.

Adult Male in winter.

Bill short, robust; upper mandible with the dorsal outline curved, the ridge and sides convex, the edges overlapping, the tip declinate, thin edged, but rounded; lower mandible with the angle short and wide, the dorsal line convex, the back broadly convex, the sides rounded, the edges inflected, the tip blunt. Nostrils basal, roundish, concealed by feathers.

Head small, ovate; neck of moderate length; body bulky. Feet of ordinary length, robust; tarsus feathered, as are the toes, the first toe very small, the middle toe much longer than the lateral, which are nearly equal, the inner being a little longer. Claws slightly arched, depressed, broad, with thin edges and rounded at the tip.

Plumage compact, the feathers generally ovate and rounded; those on the tarsi, toes, and soles oblong, with loose stiffish barbs. Wings rather short, concave; the primaries strong, narrow, tapering, pointed; the first an inch and seven-twelfths shorter than the second, which is four-twelfths shorter than the third, this being the longest, but only exceeding the fourth by a twelfth and a half. Tail rather short, nearly even, of sixteen broad feathers,

of which two are incumbent, less strong, and longer than the rest by two-twelfths of an inch.

Bill black; superciliary membrane scarlet; claws dusky, towards the end yellowish. The plumage is pure white, with the exception of a broad band of black from the upper mandible to the eye, and for a short space behind it; the shafts of the six outer quills, which are brownish-black, and all the tail-feathers, the two middle excepted, they being of a deep greyish-black colour, with a terminal narrow band of white.

Length to end of tail $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of wings 12; wing from flexure 8; tail $4\frac{1}{2}$; tarsus $1\frac{2}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{2}{12}$, its claw $\frac{5}{12}$; middle toe $1\frac{1}{2}$, its claw $\frac{8}{12}$.

Male in summer.

In summer, the plumage differs little in texture, with the exception of that on the feet, which is short and thin on the tarsi, worn on the base of the toes, of which the soles and half of the upper surface are denuded. The bill and claws are of the same colour as in winter; but the plumage is variegated with black, reddish-yellow, and white. The upper parts may be described as black, transversely and irregularly banded and spotted with yellowish-red, the feather terminally margined with white, there being on each feather several bars of yellowish-red running from the margin inwards, but leaving a black space in the centre. The lower parts are lighter, more broadly and regularly barred with brownish-black and light reddish-yellow. The feathers along the edge of the wing, the alula, primary coverts, nearly all the secondary coverts, primaries and outer secondaries, white; as are the lower surface of the wing, the axillar feathers, and some of the feathers on the abdomen, as well as those on the feet, the latter being soiled or tinged with yellowish or grey. The shafts of the primaries are brownish-black, and the tail is black as in winter, tipped with white, and with the lateral feathers having part of their outer web white; the two middle feathers barred like the back. The dimensions of an individual are as follows:

Length to end of tail $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of wings $11\frac{1}{2}$; wing from flexure $7\frac{10}{12}$; tail $4\frac{1}{2}$; bill along the ridge $\frac{7}{12}$; tarsus $1\frac{2}{12}$; middle toe $1\frac{1\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{6}{12}$.

Female in summer.

The female does not differ materially from the male, the yellow bands being only broader and lighter.

Very great differences are observed in the length and form of the claws, they being in some individuals very long, thin-edged, and tapering to a rounded point; in others very short, being worn down to the stump. This species is considerably smaller than the Ptarmigan of Scotland, which it precisely resembles in its winter plumage. In its summer plumage, however, it differs in having the markings larger; and as yet no specimens have been

obtained marked with undulated, slender, ash-grey, and dusky lines, in any degree approaching those characteristic of the British bird in its autumnal plumage. The bill of the Rock Grouse is shorter and thicker than that of the Scotch Ptarmigan, although the reverse has been alleged.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN.

+LAGOPUS LEUCURUS, *Swains.*

PLATE CCCII.—ADULT IN WINTER.

This pretty little Grouse is an inhabitant of the Rocky Mountains, where it was found by Mr. DOUGLAS and afterwards by Mr. DRUMMOND, who sent several specimens to England. It is said to extend as far as the Columbia river, but has not been observed in that region by either Mr. NUTTALL or Mr. TOWNSEND. All that is known of its habits is, that they resemble those of the Ptarmigan. Mr. DRUMMOND states, that this bird never has the black stripe from the bill to the eye, so conspicuous in the males of the other species. My figure was drawn from the only specimen now in the Museum of the Zoological Society of London.

TETRAO (LAGOPUS) LEUCURUS, Swains. WHITE-TAILED GROUSE, Richards. and Swains. Fauna Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 356.

WHITE-TAILED GROUSE, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 612.

WHITE-TAILED GROUSE, *Tetrao leucurus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. v. p. 200.

Adult in winter.

Bill short, robust; upper mandible with the dorsal outline curved, the ridge and sides convex, the edges overlapping, the tip declinate, thin edged and rounded; lower mandible with the angle short and wide, the dorsal line convex, the back broadly convex, the sides rounded, the edges inflected, the tip obtuse. Nostrils basal, roundish, concealed by the feathers.

Head small, ovate; neck of moderate length; body full. Feet of ordinary length, stout; tarsus and toes feathered; the first toe very small, the middle toe much longer than the lateral, which are nearly equal. Claws slightly arched, depressed, broad, thin-edged, the tip rather pointed.



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Rock Ptarmigan

1 Male, in Winter. 2 Female, Summer Plumage. 3 Young in August.

Drawn from Nature by J. J. Audubon, F.R.S.E.S.

Engraved by J. J. Bowen, Thos. 2



Audubon, John James. 1842. "Rock Ptarmigan, *Lagopus rupestris*, Gmel. [Pl. 301]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 5, 122–125. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319415>.

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