Little Sandpiper.

Tringa pusilla, Wils.

Plate CCCXXXVII—Male and Female.

Before proceeding to detail my observations on the habits of this humble but extremely interesting bird, I deem it necessary to inform you that I disclaim as species belonging to the United States, or even to any part of North America, the following, which however are given in the Synopsis of the Prince of Musignano, and in the work of my generous friend Thomas Nuttall, viz., Tringa platyrhincha of Temminck, T. Temminckii of Leisler, T. minuta of Leisler, T. minuta of Temminck, and T. pusilla of Bechstein. This opinion of mine I divulged to the Prince of Musignano in London, and he has on this account omitted these species in his recently published list. The extreme confusion that exists with respect to these species, and many others of the same tribe, is in my opinion caused solely by the anxiety of authors to discover or invent new species, often founding distinctions on slight differences in the length of bills, tarsi, or
SOLITARY SANDPIPER, OR TATLER.

without much care, and contained three eggs. Both birds were greatly disconcerted, ran round me, and frequently alighted on the twigs and branches with all the nimbleness of land birds, constantly throwing their heads forward and vibrating their body and tail in the manner of the Louisiana Water Thrush. The eggs measured one inch one eighth and a half in length, seven and a half eighths in breadth; the colour was greenish-yellow, with spots and patches of umber, more abundant around the crown, where the larger marks formed a conspicuous circle. I carried one of the eggs home, and, on returning a few days after to the spot, found one of the birds sitting, which proved to me that the great anxiety shewn at my first visit was chiefly because the female was about to lay her last egg. The male was absent, nor did it shew itself during my stay. About a fortnight after I found the wings of one of the birds near the place; the eggs also were gone; and I concluded that some quadruped, probably a racoon, had committed the havoc. No bird of this species was in the neighbourhood.

In the Fauna Boreali-Americana, Dr. Richardson says that in high northern latitudes these birds deposit their eggs on the bare sand, which is another proof in addition to the many already given, that great differences as to the mode of nestling may exist in the same species in different parts of the country. Indeed, almost all the habits of this curious bird differ according to the locality. In the Southern States, they are particularly fond of low flat lands among deep woods and cane brakes, and rarely approach ponds of any great extent, but prefer those which are small and most secluded. In the Middle Districts I have found them along the Lehigh, and in watery places both on low and on elevated ground. In the State of Maine they frequented similar localities. In the prairies of Indiana I have seen them in early spring, during rainy weather, wading and running through the water, on the very foot-path before me, for eight or ten yards at a time. When flushed, they would fly in a semicircle close over the ground, and re-alight at the distance of a hundred yards or so on the same path. Not one of the species was observed in Labrador or Newfoundland by my party; and my friend Thomas MacCulloch informs me that only a few single birds are seen near Pictou, and that in autumn, when they keep in marshy grounds in the neighbourhood of the sea.

The flight of the Solitary Sandpiper is swift and protracted. It moves in a zigzag manner, and at times makes its way through the woods with surprising ease, seldom leaving the starting place without uttering a clear and pleasant tweet. In re-alighting it pitches downwards like the Common Snipe. On the ground they are very active, and at times so indifferent to the approach of man, that they will merely fly across or around a small pond for a considerable time, and, if shot at and not touched, they will be sure to
be found in the same place a few hours after. Its alighting on trees has often appeared to me as singular as that of Bartram's Snipe and the Semipalmated species. The Solitary Snipe is, however, the most expert at catching insects on the wing, especially the smaller kinds of dragon-flies, which it chases from the sticks on which they alight, and generally seizes before they have flown across the little ponds, which are the favourite place of resort of this species. I have found their stomachs filled with aquatic insects, caterpillars of various kinds, and black spiders of considerable size.

I consider this bird to be a constant resident in the United States, although it ranges over a great space in summer and winter. Scarcely any difference is observable in the sexes; and I am of opinion that the young acquire their full plumage the first spring.


Male, 81, 161

Distributed from Texas over the United States, breeding in deep woody situations, in the Fur Countries on the bare sand. Columbia river. Partially migratory.

Adult Male.

Bill a little longer than the head, very slender, sub-cylindrical, straight, flexible, compressed at the base, the point rather depressed and obtuse. Upper mandible with the dorsal line straight, the ridge convex, broader at the base, slightly depressed towards the end, the sides sloping, towards the end convex, the edges soft and obtuse, the tip very slightly deflected. Nasal groove long and narrow, extending to a little beyond the middle of the bill; nostrils basal, linear, pervious. Lower mandible with the angle very long and extremely narrow, the dorsal line straight, the sides convex, with a slight groove in their basal half.

Head small, oblong, anteriorly narrowed. Eyes large. Neck rather long and slender. Body slender. Feet long and slender; tibia bare nearly half its length, scutellate before and behind; tarsus also scutellate before and behind; hind toe very small and elevated; fore toes rather long, very slender, connected at the base by webs, of which the outer is much larger; second or inner toe considerably shorter than fourth, third longest; all scutellate above, flat and marginate beneath. Claws small, slightly arched, much compressed, rather obtuse, that of middle toe much larger, with the inner edge enlarged.
Solitary Sandpiper, or Tatler.

Plumage very soft, blended, on the fore part of the head very short. Wings long, narrow, pointed; primaries rather narrow and tapering, first and second equal, the rest rapidly graduated; secondaries short, broad, incurved, obliquely rounded, the inner elongated and tapering. Tail rather short, slightly rounded, of twelve rounded feathers.

Bill greenish-black. Iris brown; edges of eyelids dark grey. Feet greenish-grey, claws brownish-black. Upper part of the head, lores, cheeks, hind neck and sides of the neck deep brownish-grey, the edges of the feathers brownish-white; a dull white line from the bill to the eye; upper part of throat greyish-white; fore-neck of the same colour, streaked with brownish-grey, as are the sides; the rest of the lower parts greyish-white. The general colour of the back and scapulars is deep greenish-brown, the feathers edged with a few small spots of white and dusky, those on the inner secondaries more numerous. Wing-coverts similar, excepting those along the edge of the wing, which, with the alula and primary coverts, are deep brownish-black; primary quills brownish-black, secondaries greyish-brown; lower wing-coverts mottled with brownish-black and white, the axillar feathers barred with greyish-white and dusky, as are the upper tail-coverts and the tail-feathers, of which the two middle are merely spotted with white on the edges.

Length to end of tail 81 inches, to end of wings 9, to end of claws 10; extent of wings 16¾; wing from flexure 5½; tail 2; bill along the back 1¾, along the edge of lower mandible 11 twelfths; tarsus 16 twelfths, middle toe 13 twelfths, its claw 11 twelfths.

Weight 15 oz.

Adult Female.

There is no decided difference between the sexes in the colouring, but the female is somewhat larger. From the only instance in which I found this species in the act of depositing its eggs, I conclude that it generally forms its nest on the higher grounds or along the declivities of hills.

Mouth very narrow, 2½ twelfths in width. Tongue 11 twelfths long, channelled above, extremely slender toward the point. Esophagus 3 inches 2 twelfths long, 2 twelfths wide; proventriculus 3 twelfths in breadth.

Stomach roundish, oblique, 9 twelfths by 5 twelfths; its lateral muscles large; epithelium dense and longitudinally rugous. Intestine 13¼ inches long; duodenum 2 twelfths in width, the rest 1½ twelfths; ceca 1 inch 2 twelfths long, 1 twelfth wide, and 1½ inches distant from the extremity; rectum slightly dilated toward the end. Trachea 2½ inches long, 11 twelfths in width, much flattened, the rings narrow, unossified, 128. Bronchial half rings about 15. Muscles as in the other species of this family.

Male.
necessity afterwards call for it, to guide you around the place until you have
discovered the nest which you are desirous of seeing.

Through these means, on the 20th of July, 1833, I after some search found
the nest and eggs of this species. The birds flew, to use the words of my
Journal, like Partridges, and not like Tringas. I marked them well, for
both the female and the male flew from near the nest, and having left my
fisher's hat where I then stood, I walked carefully over the moss hither and
thither, until at last I came upon the spot. My pleasure would have been
greatly augmented had any of my young companions been near; but the
sailors who had rowed me to the foot of the rocks exhibited little more de-
light than they would have done on finding that their grog had been stopped.
For my part, I felt as happy as when, on the same coast, I for the first time
saw the nest and eggs of the Black-crowned Warbler. Four beautiful eggs,
larger than I had expected to see produced by birds of so small a size, lay
fairly beneath my eye as I knelt over them for several minutes in perfect
eestasy. The nest had been formed first, apparently, by the patting of the
little creature's feet on the crisp moss, and in the slight hollow thus produced
were laid a few blades of slender dry grass, bent in a circular manner, the
internal diameter of the nest being two inches and a half, and its depth an
inch and a quarter. The eggs, which were in shape just like those of the
Spotted Sandpiper, Totanus macularius, measured seven and a half eighths
of an inch in length, and three-fourths of an inch in breadth. Their ground
colour was a rich cream-yellow tint, blotted and dotted with very dark
umber, the markings larger and more numerous toward the broad end. They
were placed with their pointed ends together, and were quite fresh. The
nest lay under the lee of a small rock, exposed to all the heat the sun can
afford in that country. No sooner had the little creatures felt assured that I
had discovered their treasure, than they manifested a great increase of sor-
row, flew from the top of one crag to another in quick succession, and emit-
ted notes resembling the syllables peep, peet, which were by no means agree-
able to my feelings, for I was truly sorry to rob them of their eggs, although
impelled to do so by the love of science, which affords a convenient excuse
for even worse acts.

This pair, however, would seem to have been late in depositing their eggs,
for on the 4th of August my party and myself saw young birds almost as
large as their parents, and agreeing in almost every point with the descrip-
tions given of Tringa Temminckii. Many small flocks of these birds,
consisting of old and young, were already departing from Labrador, and were
seen on all our excursions. On the 11th of August, we also found adult and
young in great numbers. But not a single newly hatched individual of this
LITTLE SANDPIPER.

species could I procure, while the young of the Ring Plover were very abundant.

I was surprised, whilst rambling along the shores of the Raritan river, between New Jersey and New York, to find a great number of Little Sandpipers, on the 29th of July, 1832, leading me to believe that they had probably bred on the elevated portions of Staten Island, although on the other hand, they might have been barren birds. I have been equally astonished to see large flocks of this species on the sand-bars along the shores of the Ohio, below the great Rapids, about the middle of August. According to Dr. Richardson, it "breeds within the Arctic Circle, arriving as soon as the snow melts. It was observed on the 21st of May, on the swampy borders of small lakes in latitude 66°. The crops of those we killed were filled with a soft blackish earth, and some white worms." From the above quotation, I would be almost inclined to believe that, like some others of our birds, which are said to be found in northern Europe, this might be one.

The habits of the Little Sandpiper have been described with great care and accuracy by my friend Thomas Nuttall. His account is indeed so perfect that I shall here lay it before you in preference to one by myself. "The Peeps, as they have been called, are seen in the salt marshes around Boston, as early as the 8th of July; indeed, so seldom are they absent from us in the summer season, that they might be taken for denizens of the state, or the neighbouring countries. When they arrive, now and then accompanied by the semi-palmated species, the air is sometimes, as it were, clouded with their flocks. Companies led from place to place in quest of food, are seen whirling suddenly in circles, with a desultory flight, at a distance resembling a swarm of hiving bees, seeking out some object on which to settle. At this time, deceiving them by an imitation of their sharp and querulous whistle, the fowler approaches, and adds destruction to the confusion of their timorous and restless flight. Flocking together for common security, the fall of their companions, and their plaintive cry, excite so much sympathy among the harmless Peeps, that, forgetting their own safety, or not well perceiving the cause of the fatality which the gun spreads among them, they fall sometimes in such a state of confusion, as to be routed with but little effort, until the greedy sportsman is glutted with his timorous and infatuated game. When much disturbed, they, however, separate into small and wandering parties, and are now seen gleaning their fare of larvae, worms, minute shell-fish, and insects, in the salt marshes, or on the muddy and sedgy shores of tide rivers and ponds. At such times they may be very nearly approached, betraying rather a heedless familiarity than a timorous mistrust of their most wily enemy; and even when rudely startled, they will often return to the same place in the next instant, to pursue their
lowly occupation of scraping in the mud, whence, probably, originated the contemptible appellation of *Humility*, by which they and some other small birds of similar habits have been distinguished. For the discovery of their food, their flexible and sensitive awl-like bills are thrust into the mire, marshy soil, or wet sand, in the manner of the Snipe and Woodcock, and in this way they discover and route from their hiding retreat, the larvae and soft worms which form a principal part of their fare. At other times, they also give chase to insects, and pursue their calling with amusing alacrity. When at length startled, or about to join the company they have left, a sharp and monotonous whistle, like the word *peet*, or *peep*, is uttered, and they instantly take to wing, and course along with the company they had left. On seeing the larger marsh-birds feeding, as the Yellow-shanks and others, a whirling flock of the Peeps will descend among them, being generally allowed to feed in quiet; and at the approach of the sportsman, these little timorous rovers are ready to give the alarm. At first, a slender *peep* is heard, which is then followed by two or three others, and presently *peep, pip, pip’ p’ p*, murmurs in a lisping whistle through the quailing ranks, as they rise on the wing, and inevitably entice with them their larger but less watchful associates. Towards evening in fine weather, the marshes almost re-echo with the shrill but rather murmuring or lisping, subdued, and querulous call of *peet*, and then a repetition of *pé-dee, pé-dee, dée-dee*, which seems to be the collecting cry of the old birds calling together their brood, for, when assembled, the note changes into a confused murmur of *peet, peet*, attended by a short and suppressed whistle.”

During my never-to-be-forgotten residence at Henderson, on the banks of the fair Ohio, I was in the habit of frequently seeing large flocks of these birds on the sandy shores of that river, during the autumnal months, and finding after awhile that they could easily be driven into a partridge net, I laid one accordingly on several occasions, when, by using gentle means, I induced many dozens of these tiny, fat, and delicious birds to enter and become prisoners. I clipped the wings of many of them, and turned them loose in my garden, for the purpose of studying their habits in this sort of half-confined state; but they were all soon destroyed by those most destructive pests, the Norway rats, which at that time infested all my premises.

I found these birds quite abundant on the whole coast of Florida, during winter, and I have no doubt that many remain with us all the year; indeed, it would not at all surprise me to hear that some of them actually breed in parts of the alpine districts of our Middle States. I have also found them equally numerous along the whole coast of the Gulf of Mexico, during my recent visit to Texas, when, late in April, some of them were still travelling
from farther south-west, and proceeding eastward. In South Carolina, they are frequent in spring and autumn, along the borders of the rice fields, and inland fresh-water ponds.

Since writing the above, Mr. Townsend has furnished me with a list of some of the birds seen by him on the Rocky Mountains and the Columbia river, in which this species is mentioned as being found along the shores of that celebrated stream of the far west.

**Little Sandpiper, Tringa pusilla, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. v. p. 32.**


Wilson's Sandpiper, *Tringa Wilsonii*, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 120.


Male, **5⅛**, **11⅛**.

Distributed along the whole coast from Texas eastward, and throughout all intermediate districts to the Columbia river. Breeds in Labrador and the Fur Countries. Found even along the lakes and ponds in the woods. Very abundant. Migratory.

Adult Male in summer plumage.

Bill shorter than the head, slender, straight, compressed, tapering from the base to near the point, which is slightly swelled, but with the tip rather acute. Upper mandible with the dorsal line straight, the ridge narrow and convex, a little broader and flattened towards the end, the sides sloping, with the nasal groove extending to near the tip. Lower mandible with the angle very long and narrow, the dorsal line straight, toward the end slightly declinate, the sides sloping a little outwards, with a groove extending to near the tip.

Head of moderate size, oblong, compressed. Neck rather short. Body compact, ovate. Feet of moderate length and slender; tibia bare a fourth of its length; tarsus of moderate length, compressed, scutellate before and behind, so as to leave scarcely any intermediate space; hind toe extremely small; anterior toes rather long, slender, free, slightly margined, and with numerous scutella above. Claws small, slightly arched, much compressed, that of the third toe larger, with the inner edge a little dilated.

Plumage soft, blended on the neck and lower parts, somewhat compact on the upper. Wings long, pointed; primaries tapering, obtuse, the first longest, the second very little shorter, the third rather more than one-eighth of an inch shorter than the second, the rest rapidly decreasing; outer secondaries incurved, obliquely rounded, inner straight, tapering, one of them reaching to two-twelfths of an inch of the end of the first quill. Tail of moderate length, doubly emarginate, that is with the middle feathers

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THE YELLOWSHANK TATLER.

Bill greenish-dusky; feet pale dull yellowish-green; claws black; iris hazel. The feathers on the upper part of the head, and back, including the scapulars, smaller wing-coverts, and inner secondaries, black, broadly margined with light brownish-red; some of the scapulars margined externally with white, and the larger glossed with green. Alula, primary coverts, primary quills, and outer secondaries, greyish-black, all more or less narrowly tipped with greyish-white; secondary coverts largely tipped with the same; the primaries externally margined with the same toward the base, as are the outer secondaries in a fainter degree, the inner webs of some of the latter greyish-white towards the base. Rump and upper tail-coverts black. The two middle tail-feathers black, with pale brownish-red margins, the next feather on each side greyish-brown, margined with greyish-white, the outer four pale brownish-grey, very narrowly margined externally, more broadly round their points and along the inner edges with greyish-white; lateral tail-coverts with the outer web white. From the forehead over the eye to the occiput, a band of dull greyish-white, faintly streaked with dusky; loral band brownish-dusky, that colour extending to the ear-coverts; the rest of the cheeks dull greyish-white, faintly streaked with dusky; the throat greyish-white; the sides and fore part of the neck of the same colour, faintly streaked with dusky; the rest of the lower parts, including the axillar and lateral rump feathers, pure white; the lower surface of the wing pale brownish-grey, the coverts margined and tipped with greyish-white; the shafts of the primaries white.

Length to end of tail 5½ inches, to end of wings 5 1/2; extent of wings 11 3/8; from tip of bill to carpal joint 2; wing from flexure 3 4/15; tail 1 1/15; bill along the ridge 1 3/15; tarsus 2 1/2; hind toe and claw 2 1/2, middle toe and claw 10 1/2; outer toe and claw 8; inner 1/2 shorter.

Adult Female.

The female is somewhat larger than the male, but similarly coloured.

In autumn, previous to the moult, the upper parts are of a darker colour, on account of the wearing of the red margins of the feathers.

On the roof of the mouth is a series of papillae, and the tongue is 7 twelfths long, extremely slender, and tapering to a fine point. The oesophagus is 2 inches and 11 twelfths long, 1 twelfth in diameter; the proventriculus enlarged to 2 1/5 twelfths, its length 5 twelfths. The stomach is a powerful gizzard, ½ inch long, 4½ twelfths broad; its lateral muscles large, as are the tendons. Its contents were coleopterous and other insects. The epithelium longitudinally rugous, and of a brownish-red colour. The intestine of
moderate length, measuring 9 1/2 inches, its average diameter 1 1/2 twelfths. The ceca 1 1/2 inches long, their greatest diameter 3/8 of a twelfth.

The trachea is 1 3/12 inches long, flattened, unossified, 1 1/2 twelfths in diameter at the top, diminishing to 1 twelfth; the number of rings about 105. Bronchial half-rings 15.

SANDELLING SANDPIPER.

† Tringa arenaria, Bonap.

PLATE CCCXXXVIII.—Male and Female.

Although the Sanderling extends its rambles along our Atlantic shores, from the eastern extremities of Maine to the southernmost Keys of the Floridas, it is only an autumnal and winter visitcr. It arrives in the more Eastern Districts about the 1st of August, on the sea-shores of New York and New Jersey rarely before the 10th of August, and seldom reaches the extensive sand-banks of East Florida previous to the month of November. Along the whole of this extended coast, it is more or less abundant, sometimes appearing in bands composed of a few individuals, and at times in large flocks, but generally mingling with other species of small shore-birds. Thus I have seen Turnstones and Knots mixed with the Sanderlings, but in such cases they are perhaps wanderers, which have not succeeded in meeting with companions of their own species, that associate with the birds of which I here speak.

The Sanderling obtains its food principally by probing the moist sands of the sea-shores with its bill held in an oblique position. At every step it inserts this instrument with surprising quickness, to a greater or less depth, according to the softness of the sand, sometimes introducing it a quarter of an inch, sometimes to the base. The holes thus made may be seen on the borders of beaches, when the tide is fast receding, in rows of twenty, thirty, or more; in certain spots less numerous; for it appears that when a place proves unproductive of the food for which they are searching, they very soon take to their wings and remove to another, now and then in so hurried a manner that one might suppose they had been suddenly frightened. The contents of the stomach of those which I shot while thus occupied, were
The female was about to lay her last egg. The male was absent, nor did it shew itself during my stay. About a fortnight after I found the wings of one of the birds near the place; the eggs also were gone; and I concluded that some quadruped, probably a racoon, had committed the havoc. No bird of this species was in the neighbourhood.

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