edges flattened, and directly meeting those of the upper mandible, the extremity enlarged, the tip contracted and rather blunt. Nostrils basal, linear, very small. Head rather small, oblong, the forehead elevated and rounded; neck rather short; body rather full. Legs of moderate length, slender; tibia bare below; tarsus scutellate before and behind; toes very slender, free, scutellate; first toe very small and elevated, lateral toes nearly equal, the outer connected with the third by a basal web. Claws small, slightly arched, compressed, rather acute. Plumage very soft, rather dense. Wings long, narrow, pointed; the first quill longest; inner secondaries much elongated. Tail moderate, nearly even.

WILSON'S SNIPE.—COMMON SNIPE.

+ *SCOLOPAX WILSONII*, *Temm.*

PLATE CCCL.—MALE AND FEMALES.

The summer range of the Common American Snipe extends northward to a considerable distance beyond the limits of the United States. During the breeding season it is not to be found in our Southern Districts, much less does it breed on the borders of the Mississippi, as has been alleged by some writers. It may indeed sometimes happen that a pair is found during summer in the mountainous districts of the Carolinas; but occurrences of this kind are rare, and are probably caused by one of the birds being disabled, and so prevented from prosecuting its journey farther northward, although not incapacitated for reproduction. Some pairs are more frequently met with in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, either with eggs or with young, but the great body of this species goes farther north for the purpose of breeding. In the State of Maine, they become tolerably abundant at this season, and as you proceed eastward you find them more numerous. In Nova Scotia they are plentiful during summer, and there they breed in all convenient places.

In these northern districts, the Snipe begins to lay its eggs in the early part of June. The swampy parts of the extensive moss-covered marshes in elevated situations afford it places of security and comfort, in which it is not

likely to be disturbed by man, and finds immediately around it an abundance of food. The nest itself is a mere hollow in the moss, scantily inlaid with a few grasses. The eggs, which, like those of many of the *Tringas*, are four, and placed with the small ends together, measure one inch and five-eighths by one and one-eighth, being pyriform, with the tip somewhat inflated. The ground colour is a yellowish-olive, pretty thickly spotted and blotched with light and dark umber, the markings increasing in size as they approach the large end, where they form a circle. The young, like those of the Woodcock, leave the nests as soon as hatched, and so resemble those of the Common Snipe of Europe, *Scolopax Gallinago*, that the same description answers for both, they being covered with down of different tints of brown and greyish-yellow. The bill is at this age short, very soft and easily bent by the least pressure; nor does it acquire its full growth before winter, and its length differs in different apparently full grown individuals, by half an inch or even three-fourths. They seem to feed at first on minute insects collected on the surface of the mires, or amid the grass and moss; but as they grow older, and the bill becomes firmer and larger, they probe the ground like their parents, and soon become expert at this operation, introducing the bill at every half inch or so of the oozy mire, from which they principally obtain their food. In the Middle States, this Snipe, however, has been found breeding in meadows, as well as in the State of Maine; and it also nestles in the mountainous districts of these parts of the Union. I never had the good fortune to meet with a nest in Pennsylvania, although I have known several instances of a pair breeding not far from Mill Grove on the Perkioming.

In the Western Country this bird arrives from the north early in October, alighting in the low meadows watered by warm springs, and along the borders of ponds and small secluded rivulets, sometimes in the corn-fields after a continuance of rainy weather, but never in the woods or any place from which it cannot easily make its escape when approached. In Kentucky it often remains all winter, and is at times very abundant. Farther south, it is more plentiful, especially in the lower parts of Louisiana, where it is named "*cache cache*" by the Creoles, and over the whole country between that State and the Carolinas. During winter, it is not uncommon in Louisiana to meet with it in flocks of considerable numbers, as is also the case in South Carolina, where the grounds of the rice-planter afford it abundance of food. In some fields well known to my Charleston friends, as winter retreats of the Snipe, it is shot in great numbers. At times it is so much less careful about concealing itself than at others, that it is not at all uncommon to see it walking about over its wet feeding-grounds, and on such occasions many are killed. In such places I have found these birds by fifties

and hundreds in fields of a few acres. At the first shots, dozens in succession would take to wing, each emitting its cry of *wau-aik*, after which they would rise in the air, gradually collect, fly around a few times to the distance of some hundred yards, and returning pitch towards the ground, and alight, with the velocity of an arrow, not many yards from the spot where they had previously been. In a few minutes they would all disperse, to seek for food. So much are they at times attached to particular spots, that the sportsmen continue to shoot them until their number is reduced to a few, which having perhaps been several times shot at, become extremely wary, and are left to entice others to join them, so that another day's sport may be obtained. It is not rare to find some of these birds in the immediate vicinity of Charleston, when they are pursued by the younger gunners, and sometimes by keen sportsmen. I have known eight or ten procured by one person in a short time, between that city and the race-ground, which is scarcely a mile distant. They are also abundant in the wet savannahs in the Floridas, from which they retire a few weeks earlier than from Louisiana and the Carolinas, where some remain until the beginning of April. During the whole of the winter months, these birds are observed to ramble from one place to another, and a field which yesterday contained a good number, has only a few to-day, and to-morrow may be quite deserted. But before the end of a week, there you will find them again, as abundant as at first. They rarely visit salt waters, and never resort to the interior of the woods.

The flight of the Snipe while travelling to some distance, is performed at a considerable elevation, by regular and quickly repeated beats of the wings. Yet they do not appear as if pursuing a direct course, for every now and then they deviate a little to either side. They pass over rapidly, however, and are able to travel to a great distance in a short time. Their migrations, although performed singly, or in small parties of a single family, may be said to be in a manner continuous, as in the course of a few days a whole section of country, in which none had been seen for several months, becomes well supplied with them. When surprised by the sportsman, or any other enemy, they usually rise at one spring, dash through the air in a zig-zag course, a few feet from the ground, emit their cry when about twenty yards distant, and at times continue to employ this cunning mode of escape for sixty or seventy yards, after which they mount into the air, and perform the rounds already described. I have found the instant at which they utter their note of alarm the best for pulling the trigger; but almost every sportsman has his peculiar fancy, and many are glad to kill them the best way they can; for he who shoots thirty Snipes in succession, without missing one, is a good hand at any kind of shooting. Sometimes the Snipe will squat with great pertinacity, and even stand a pointer, while at other times it will not suffer

either man or dog to approach within fifty yards of it. This, however, depends much on the state of the atmosphere. The finer and warmer the day, the easier I have found it to get near them, and the smaller is the distance at which they realight; whereas during drizzly weather, they fly off to a great distance. When the Snipe alights within sight, and you are concealed and silent, its movements can easily be observed. It first stands for an instant in a half crouching attitude, as if to listen, then raises itself and runs a few steps, when, if it be in any degree apprehensive of danger, it squats, and there remains until put up. If all around is quiet, you see it move in its ordinary manner, walking lightly, and with some grace, its bill half inclined downwards, in search of a good spot to probe for food. The instant it meets with this it sets to work, and thrusts its bill into the mud or the damp soil, to a depth determined by the degree of softness of the ground, repeating its thrusts eight, ten, or more times in quick succession. When it has thus examined a spot, and perhaps found some food, it walks off in search of another, and thus continues until it is satisfied, when it generally lays itself down in a soft tuft of grass until the approach of night, when it flies off and rambles about for exercise in comparative security. When wounded, it runs with moderate speed, but, if closely pursued, squats whenever a good opportunity occurs. It will at times continue to run for fifty or more yards, after which, if you have not a good dog, it is next to impossible to find it, for on such occasions it remains perfectly silent. While travelling eastward from Charleston, in the month of March, I found this Snipe perhaps more abundant near the Great Santee river than any where else. We could see them with ease from the carriage as they were walking over the rice-fields, as if in perfect assurance of security.

The food of our Common Snipe consists principally of ground-worms, insects, and the juicy slender roots of different vegetables, all of which tend to give its flesh that richness of flavour and juicy tenderness, for which it is so deservedly renowned, it being equal to that of the Woodcock. Many epicures eat up both Snipe and Woodcock with all their viscera, worms and insects to boot, the intestines in fact being considered the most savoury parts. On opening some newly killed Snipes, I have more than once found fine large and well-fed ground-worms, and at times a leech, which I must acknowledge I never conceived suitable articles of food for man, and, for this reason, I have always taken good care to have both Snipes and Woodcocks well cleaned, as all game ought to be.

To WILSON is due the merit of having first shewn the difference between this bird and the Common Snipe of Europe; and it is honourable for the ornithologists of that region of the globe to have dedicated our species to so zealous and successful a student of nature. I have, however, been surprised

that he should not have mentioned the difference in the notes of the two species, which in fact is as great as that between those of the American Crow and the Carrion Crow of Europe. A decided difference of this kind I am always disposed to consider as satisfactory in the case of nearly allied species. While glancing over some of the numberless compilations that are pouring their muddy waters into the great stream of human knowledge, I was somewhat surprised to find in one of them an account of the American Snipe, in which it is stated that it is a *winter* visitant in the *northern* States, and will most probably breed farther *south*, without leaving the country!

The American Snipe is easily caught in snares placed on the spots of mud which it is wont to probe, and a good number are thus obtained by the farmers' children, especially during very cold weather, when, the birds having become emaciated from want of a good supply of food, they resort to the small warm springs of our meadows, and there remain until the return of milder weather. At such times and places, I have heard this bird utter various curious notes, which I am unable to describe, putting themselves into strange postures all the while, jerking their tails upwards, downwards, and sideways, for several seconds at a time, while the head and neck were moved backwards and forwards, as if the bird had been in a fit. I never saw this during warm weather, and am unable to account for it.

It arrives in Pennsylvania from the south about the middle of March, earlier or later according to the nature of the season, a month later in Maine, and about a week or ten days after in Nova Scotia. We neither saw nor heard of any in Newfoundland or Labrador, but they are abundant in the interior of the northern parts of the Canadas.

The young acquire the full plumage of the adult the first year after their birth, when no essential difference is perceptible between the sexes, the female being merely somewhat larger than the male. My friend THOMAS MACCULLOCH, who has not unfrequently found this bird breeding, and from whom I have received many of its eggs, was unable to say whether both sexes incubate, although this is very probable, as the male is often seen with or near the female while she is sitting, excepting towards evening or in the early part of the morning, when he mounts into the air, as if for the purpose of congratulating her by his curious song. It often happens that before these birds depart in spring, many are already mated. The birds are then met with in meadows or on low grounds, and, by being on the spot before sunrise, you may see both mount high in the air in a spiral manner, now with continuous beats of the wings, now in short sailings, until more than a hundred yards high, when they whirl round each other with extreme velocity, and dance as it were to their own music; for at this juncture, and during the space of five or six minutes, you hear rolling notes mingling

together, each more or less distinct, perhaps according to the state of the atmosphere. The sounds produced are extremely pleasing, though they fall faintly on the ear. I know not how to describe them, but I am well assured that they are not produced simply by the beatings of the wings, as at this time the wings are not flapped, but are used in sailing swiftly in a circle not many feet in diameter. A person might cause a sound somewhat similar by blowing rapidly and alternately from one end to another, across a set of small pipes consisting of two or three modulations. This performance is kept up until incubation terminates, but I never observed it at any other period. Our Woodcock produces a somewhat similar sound at the same season, and also at times on fine autumnal evenings, as I shall mention more particularly when describing that bird.

In confinement, our Common Snipe feeds freely on moistened Indian corn meal, mixed with some insects, but rarely becomes as gentle as the Woodcock in similar circumstances. When approached, it droops its wings and runs round its place of confinement, even should it be a small room, keeping its tail spread out on the side next you. If the bird is confined in a small space in front of you, it alternately throws the tail upwards, and spreads it in the manner mentioned at every successive turn to and from each corner. Sometimes it emits a lisping sound, but is more usually silent.

Mr. T. M. MACCULLOCH writes me thus:—"In your article upon the Snipe, you seem to be unable to say whether the male incubates or not. I am inclined to think he does not. A pair of them have a nest this year close to our house, though I have not been able to find the spot. During any hour of the day, for some time past, the male could be heard uttering his curious notes in circles high up in the sky, beyond the reach of sight, and at night, even as late as eleven o'clock, I have heard him serenading his beloved with as much ardour as any lover who ever tried to win his way by music to his mistress' heart. The Snipe flies low at night, and in circles, as in the day; but it is only in particular spots and at short intervals that the sound is heard. The note is exceedingly like the winnowing noise which the wings of Pigeons make when alighting on the ground, and I have never yet been able to determine whether it is actually the voice of the Snipe which is heard, or whether it is produced by the bird's stopping in certain parts of his course and beating the air in some particular way with his wings."

SCOLOPAX WILSONII, Bonap. Syn., p. 330.

SNIPE, *Scolopax Gallinago*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. vi. p. 18.

SCOLOPAX WILSONII, *Wilson's Snipe*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 401.

WILSON'S SNIPE, Nutt. Man., vol. ii. p. 185.

AMERICAN SNIPE, *Scolopax Wilsonii*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iii. p. 322; vol. v. p. 583.

Male, $10\frac{1}{2}$, 17.

Distributed throughout the country. Breeds from Virginia northwards. Exceedingly abundant in the Southern and Western Districts during winter.

Adult Male.

Bill twice as long as the head, subulate, straight, compressed for more than half its length, depressed towards the end. Upper mandible with the dorsal line straight, the ridge for a short space at the base flattish, then convex, towards the end flattened, the sides with a narrow groove extending to near the tip, which is obtuse and probe-like, the edges soft and obtuse. Nostrils basal, linear, very small. Lower mandible with the angle extremely long and narrow, the sides nearly erect, with a groove having several bars across it; the end of both mandibles covered, after death, with numerous prominences, or rather with reticular depressions, leaving small prominences between them.

Head rather small, oblong, narrowed anteriorly, the forehead elevated and rounded. Neck rather short. Body rather full. Legs of moderate length, slender; tibia bare below, scutellate before and behind; tarsus with numerous scutella before, smaller ones behind, and reticulated sides; toes very slender, free, scutellate above, narrow and slightly margined beneath; first very small, third longer than the tarsus, fourth much shorter, but considerably longer than second. Claws slightly arched, extremely compressed, very acute, that of the third toe largest.

Plumage very soft, rather full, blended, on the fore part of the head very short. Wings of moderate length, narrow, sharp; primaries broad, tapering, but rounded, the first extremely small and pointed, the second longest, the third very little shorter, the rest rapidly graduated; secondaries broad, short, incurved, rounded, the inner very long, tapering, as are the scapulars. Tail short, rounded, of sixteen rounded feathers.

Bill brown, the granulated part towards the tip black. Iris hazel. Feet bluish-grey, claws dusky. On the upper part of the head two brownish-black longitudinal broad bands, separated by a narrower central pale brown one, and with another pale brown band on each side from the bill over the eye; then a loreal band of dark brown; chin whitish; neck pale reddish-brown, spotted with brownish-black. The general colour of the upper parts is brownish-black, variegated with pale reddish-brown, of which latter colour are the outer edges of the scapulars and of the lateral feathers on the anterior part of the back. Wing-coverts and inner secondaries similarly mottled, the smaller anterior coverts, the primary coverts, primary quills, and outer secondaries deep brown, more or less tipped with white; first quill white, dusky in the centre, second with the outer edge brownish-white; rump barred with yellowish-grey and dusky; upper tail-coverts similar, but the

larger barred with brownish-red and black. Tail-feathers brownish-black at the base, with a broad subterminal band of brownish-red on the outer web of the two middle, and on both webs of the rest, excepting the outer on each side, which is barred with brownish-black and white, the black bars five; the tips of all white. Anterior part of breast like the neck, the rest white; abdomen and lower tail-coverts greyish-yellow, barred with brownish-black, as are the sides; scapulars white, barred with greyish-black; lower wing-coverts similarly mottled.

Length to end of tail $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of claw $11\frac{1}{2}$; extent of wings 17; wing from flexure 5; tail $2\frac{1}{4}$; bill along the back $2\frac{7}{12}$, along the edge of lower mandible $2\frac{5}{12}$; tarsus $1\frac{2}{12}$, middle toe $1\frac{1}{4}$, its claw $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$. Weight 3 oz.

Adult Female.

The female resembles the male, but is rather larger.

Autumnal plumage.

The young in autumn resemble the old birds, but have the dark markings of a browner tint, the light more dingy, and the colours in general less pure.

In an adult male, the mouth is excessively narrow, its breadth being only 2 twelfths; on the palate are three longitudinal ridges of strong reversed papillæ, terminating anteriorly in a single ridge of similar papillæ. Both mandibles are moderately concave, with very thick sloping edges. The tongue is 1 inch 8 twelfths long, very slender, induplicate, so as to be deeply channelled in its whole length, emarginate and papillate at the base, tapering to a narrow, horny point. The œsophagus is 9 inches 9 twelfths long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in width; the proventriculus $3\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth. The stomach of moderate size, roundish; its lateral muscles large, the inferior prominent; its length 9 twelfths, its breadth the same; the epithelium thin, dense, with numerous longitudinal rugæ, and of a reddish colour. The right lobe of the liver is 1 inch 8 twelfths, the other only 10 twelfths in length; gall-bladder ovate, 4 twelfths long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth. Intestine $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches, its greatest width $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, the least 1 twelfth; the cœca 7 twelfths long, $\frac{3}{4}$ twelfth in breadth, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the extremity; the cloaca ovate, 6 twelfths in width. The intestine curves at first in the usual manner, at the distance of 1 inch 4 twelfths, then advances toward the right lobe of the liver, proceeds backward, forms a single convolution, and terminates in the rectum over the stomach, making altogether only 5 turns.

Trachea 2 inches 10 twelfths long, from $1\frac{3}{4}$ twelfths to $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth, flattened, like that of every other species of the family; the rings very narrow, completely unossified, 108 in number, with 2 additional dimidiate rings. Bronchial half rings 15. Muscles as usual in this family.

Wilson's Snipe - Common Snipe.
1. Male, 2 & 3 Females.

PLANTATION NEAR CHARLESTON, S.C.

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

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