THE MARSH-SANDPIPER (*Totanus stagnatilis*, Bechst.) AS A BRITISH BIRD.

BY

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In his "Manual of British Birds" (2nd Edition, p. 620) the late Howard Saunders calls attention to the fact that the reputed Marsh-Sandpiper which was shot at Tring Reservoir in October, 1887, "was not submitted to competent authorities at the time, and has since been burned."* This being the only record of this species in Great Britain up to the present time, its claims for inclusion in the British list have been slender. In June, 1909, however, a pair of undoubted *Totanus stagnatilis* was obtained in Sussex.

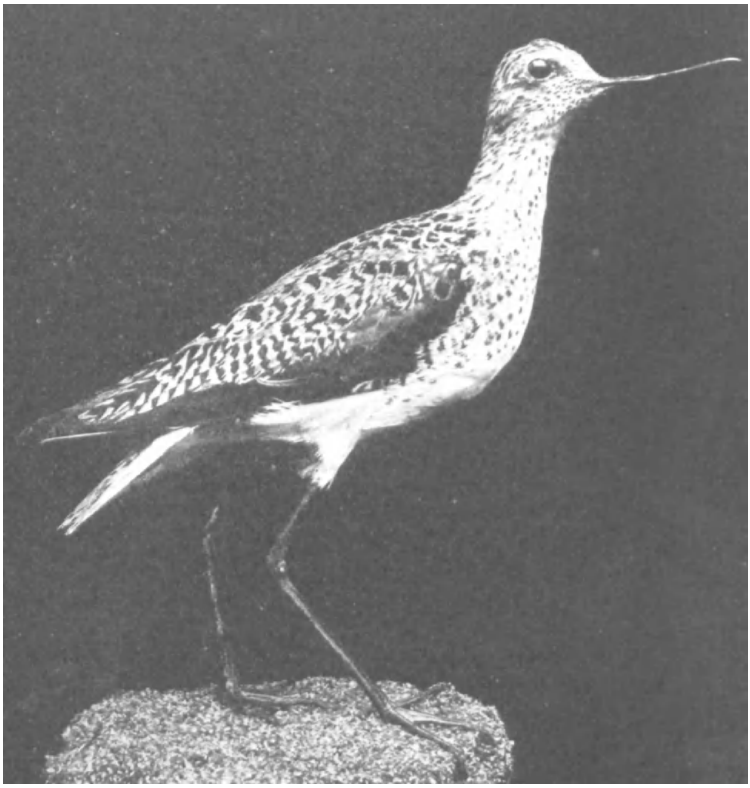
The female of the pair—an adult in summer-plumage—was shot on June 16th, at a pool of water in the beach on the west side of Rye Harbour. Two days later an adult male was shot at the same place. Both of these were examined by the writer, the first in the flesh and the second when partly skinned.

These interesting birds are now in the collection of Mr. J. B. Nichols, who has kindly lent them for the purpose of reproducing the accompanying figure.

It is satisfactory, though not surprising, that the Marsh-Sandpiper has at last been added to the British list. It has occurred on Heligoland and in Northern France, therefore it was only to be expected that sooner or later it would put in an appearance on our coasts. The occurrence of a rare straggler in England at a time

* The Hon. Walter Rothschild informs us that this specimen was undoubtedly correctly identified at the time by himself and verified by reference to Dresser's "Birds of Europe" and other means. Unfortunately, through a bad accident, some hundreds of Mr. Rothschild's birds were burnt, and among them this specimen of the Marsh-Sandpiper. Howard Saunders' statement in the "Manual" is explained by the fact that he did not know Mr. Rothschild at all at the time, and was unaware of his capability to identify the bird correctly.—Eds.

when it should be in the midst of breeding operations would seem remarkable, were it not for the fact that this is by no means an unprecedented event. I know of several instances of the appearance in England of birds,



MARSH-SANDPIPER—MALE SHOT NEAR RYE, SUSSEX, ON JUNE 18TH, 1909.

not known to breed here, at a time when they should have been engaged in rearing their young. The cause of this is probably due to the fact that their eggs have been destroyed, and it being too early to migrate southwards,

the birds have wandered aimlessly about until they reached our coasts. Such a solution is frequently suggested by Gaetke in his "Birds of Heligoland."

The breeding range of the Marsh-Sandpiper in Europe appears to be confined to Austria-Hungary and Southern Russia, but there is some evidence that it has bred in the Camargue, and Dr. Cullen said he took one nest in the Dobrudscha. It also extends right across Asia, probably to the Sea of Okhotsk and north to Lat. 55 or 56 in Siberia. In winter the bird ranges to the Cape in Africa, and to the Malay Archipelago, New Guinea and Australia.

In Egypt, the only country in which I have met with it, the Marsh-Sandpiper is not uncommon during the autumn, winter, and early spring. It frequents marshy ground and the shores of the lakes, such as Menzaleh, usually singly, though sometimes in small flocks. It is shy and difficult of approach.

In appearance the Marsh-Sandpiper somewhat resembles a miniature Greenshank, but the call-note, general habits, and flight are more like those of the Wood-Sandpiper (*T. glareola*). So far as my limited experience goes, this Sandpiper seldom consorts with other waders. It is easily distinguished even at a distance from the Wood- and Green Sandpipers by its pale coloration and long legs.

Winter-plumage, adult male, November 6th, 1906, Province of Giza, *forehead*, *lores* and whole of *underparts* pure white; *nape*, grey; *crown*, *mantle*, *scapulars* and *inner secondaries*, greyish-brown; *lesser wing-coverts* dull brown; *greater wing-coverts* greyish-brown, like the mantle, each feather narrowly edged with white; *lower back* and *rump* white; *upper tail-coverts* white, barred with black; *tail*: outer pair of rectrices white, marbled with grey on the outer web, remainder similar, but with irregular black bars on the inner webs, central pair smoky-grey with V-shaped bars of black; *remiges* dull black, the first primary having a white shaft, the others being brown.

In some specimens the feathers of the mantle are narrowly edged with white, and the long inner secondaries are faintly blotched with black, such examples are, I fancy, birds of the year. Wing 132 mm ; culmen 47 mm.; tarsus, 51 mm.

The summer-plumage is somewhat similar, but the whole of the upperparts are mottled and streaked with black, while the feathers of the cheeks, ear-coverts, and the upper part of the breast have a broad dark mesial mark which produces a spotted appearance.

The bill is very slender, and like that of the Greenshank is slightly recurved towards the tip.