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Taxonomy, identification and status of Desert Sparrows

Guy M Kirwan, Manuel Schweizer, Raffael Ayé & Andrew Grieve

Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex* is traditionally considered to comprise three subspecies: *P s simplex* (M H C Lichtenstein, 1823), *P s zarudnyi* Pleske, 1896, and *P s saharae* Erlanger, 1899. The first- and last-named occur in Africa, although there is some dispute as to their respective ranges, and as to whether more than one name is required for these populations. Hartert (1921), Bannerman (1948) and Summers-Smith (1988) all prefer to recognize merely *simplex* for African birds, whereas other authors, most notably Vaurie (1956), Moreau & Greenway (1962) and Cramp & Perrins (1994), have elected to also treat *saharae* as a valid form. The most recent treatments are those of Dickinson (2003) and Fry & Keith (2004); in both, two subspecies are recognized in Africa.

The third subspecies of Desert Sparrow, *zarudnyi*, has a small range in Central Asia, and anecdotal reports suggest that it has decreased in numbers (and perhaps also range) in recent years (see Results), making its status of particular concern. *P s zarudnyi* is known mainly from Turkmenistan, from an area lying between Yaradzhi (Yaradzha), Darvaza, Chardzhev (Chardzhou, Turkmenabad) and Mary (Merv) in the Qara Qum (Karakum) Desert, but also from the extreme west of the Qizil Qum (Kizilkum) Desert in Uzbekistan (Sopyev 1965, Summers-Smith 1988). In the Asian portion of its range, the species has been most frequently found in the vicinity of Repetek Biosphere Reserve, at the eastern edge of the Karakum Desert, from whence the majority of specimens in museums originate (pers obs; see also Redman 1993b). At least formerly, the species apparently also occurred in eastern Iran (see below).

In describing *zarudnyi*, Pleske drew attention to a number of comparatively minor distinctions from *P simplex* (translation provided by Vladimir Loskot), but given the relative lack of material pertaining to the second-named taxon in St Petersburg, Russia, it is unsurprising that he made little of the most striking difference between African and Asian

152 Desert Sparrow / Afrikaanse Woestijnmus *Passer simplex saharae*, male, Merzouga, Tafilalt, Morocco, 30 March 2009 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)*

populations. Sexual dimorphism, which is well defined in Saharan Desert Sparrows, is close to nonexistent in those populations that inhabit the deserts of Central Asia.

Arguably, the first person to draw widespread attention to the distinctiveness of *zarudnyi* in the English-language literature was Vaurie (1956, 1959), who, in the former publication, closed his brief account of its distinguishing features with the remark: 'It is very well differentiated.' Nonetheless, the extreme paucity of museum material in the western world pertaining to *zarudnyi* has unquestionably 'quelled' appreciation of its taxonomic interest. Thus, in his generally fine review of the genus *Passer*, Summers-Smith (1988) repeated Vaurie's comment but then, presumably because he was unable to examine specimens himself, failed to 'capture' the uniqueness of *zarudnyi*; it is in fact the only member of the genus, other than Tree Sparrow *P montanus* and the Grey-headed Sparrow *P griseus* complex to exhibit such muted sexual dimorphism. Redman (1993a), however, based on his field observations at Repetek, Turkmenistan, called attention once more to this strange difference in the two widely disjunct populations of *P simplex*, as well as pointing out errors and deficiencies in some previous literature on the subject (eg, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970, Summers-Smith 1988). (Even very recently, Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) described the characters of *zarudnyi* so vaguely and in part incorrectly as to invite confusion with the African taxa.) Concurrently, Clement et al (1993) also correctly described the broad differences between *zarudnyi* versus *simplex/saharae*. Impressed by these, Sibley (1996) elected to split Desert Sparrow into African and Asian species, although this proposal has to date received no prominent published support.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: ***1*** to reexamine and quantify the possibility that *zarudnyi* merits specific status under any species concept currently operating but especially the modern Biological Species Concept (Helbig et al 2002) or the General Species Concept (de Queiroz 2005); ***2*** to revisit the issue of whether subspecific-level differences exist in African populations under modern interpretations of the Biological Species Concept (eg, Barrowclough 1982, Haffer 2003); and ***3*** to consider the current status and distribution of the Central Asian population.

Methods

Guy M Kirwan acquired mensural data from specimens of all three taxa as follows. The Natural History Museum, Tring, England (NHM): *simplex/saharae* (Algeria, Chad, Libya and Mali: n=35, including 19 males); the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), Washington DC, USA (NMNH): *saharae* (Algeria: n=1, male) and *zarudnyi* (Repetek, Turkmenistan: n=3, including two males); Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum Naturalis, Leiden, the Netherlands (RMNH): *simplex* ('Nubia': n=2, including one male) and *saharae* (Tunisia: n=4, including two males); Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia (ZISP): *saharae* (locality unknown: n=2, both males) and *zarudnyi* (Turkmenistan: n=12, including eight males); and the Zoological Museum, Natural History Museum of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kiev, Ukraine (ZMAU): *zarudnyi* (Turkmenistan: n=7; including three males). Mensural data for those specimens held in the National University of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan (NUU), were obtained by RA as follows: *zarudnyi* (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: n=6, including five males). In addition, digital photographs of the sole specimen of *zarudnyi* held in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, USA (AMNH), were examined. During the course of the project, it was possible only to examine the type of *zarudnyi* (ZISP 67680/2371) but we have examined material from the type region of *simplex* ('Nubia') and *saharae* (Tunisia). The following data were obtained from each specimen: wing chord (flattened) and tail length, using a standard metal wing-rule with a perpendicular stop at zero (accurate to 0.5 mm), and culmen length (to skull), using digital callipers (accurate to 0.01 mm).

Notes on plumage variation in both sexes were taken and ranked according to their usefulness in distinguishing them. A broad range of material, pertaining to all three taxa, was photographed, using a Nikon Coolpix 885 digital camera. Field photographs of *zarudnyi* appear to be comparatively rare (see, eg, Knystautas 1992) but were used to elucidate and further assess the importance or real distinctiveness of plumage characters initially identified through specimen examination.

A Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to examine the biometrical data. Desert Sparrows were grouped by sex and by taxon, to form six subgroups. General Linear Models were used to investigate specific differences between taxa and between sexes. All statistical tests were carried out using Minitab 14.2, whilst the PCA scatter diagram (figure 1) was constructed in PAST (PAlaeontologigal STatistics). All Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was tested one-way to evaluate significant mean differences between the different

taxa. Specimens for which an incomplete series of mensural data was available were excluded from the statistical analysis.

A list of all specimens of *zarudnyi* held at ZISP, NUU, ZMAU and AMNH, as well as in the Zoological Museum, Moscow Lomonosov State University, Moscow, Russia, was compiled. Coordinates of each location were plotted on a map. Further, selected ornithologists working in Central Asia (both resident and visitors), especially the Karakum and Kizilkum deserts, were contacted, to provide observations from the edges of the known range of this taxon and/or circumstantial evidence of population trends. Field observations of Desert Sparrows were made by GMK in Morocco in December 1995, by Manuel Schweizer in Tunisia in November 2004, February 2005 and November 2006, and by Raffael Ayé in Tunisia in November 2005.

Results

Distinctiveness of zarudnyi

Specimens of *zarudnyi* were directly compared with those of African *simplex* in just two institutions, ZISP and NMNH. In plumage, males of *zarudnyi* differ from *simplex/saharae* in the following respects. The facial mask is decidedly more obvious, being more globular around the eye and extending further behind it. Even in spring (April-May), the mask appears blacker in *zarudnyi* than in African birds (cf plate 118 in Densley 1990). Same-season *zarudnyi* differs from *simplex/saharae* in having overall greyer upperparts, especially the rump, which is much paler and whiter in African birds but concolorous in the Asian population, whilst the back and scapulars of African *simplex/saharae* are browner until late winter but concolorous and uniform grey in *zarudnyi*. The wing-coverts pattern of the two populations also differs, with a much more whitish greater covert panel and obvious black forewing (leading edge to the coverts) in *simplex/saharae*, neither of which is shared by *zarudnyi* (see plate 153, 159 and 170). Furthermore, the overall area of the pale 'panel' in the remiges, which varies from whitish to buffish according to wear and plumage state, is considerably less striking in *zarudnyi* than in *simplex/saharae* (plate 153, 159 and 165). Vaurie (1956) drew attention to the notion that *zarudnyi* is paler and whiter below (with many fewer buffy elements) than *simplex/saharae*, and there is some evidence to suggest this. Plate 155, 157, 158 and 163 show comparisons between males of *zarudnyi* and *saharae* taken in the same season (midwinter), a series of *saharae* and *simplex* taken both pre- and post-breeding, and a series of *zarudnyi* from different seasons. There might also be some evidence to indicate that the black bib is more extensive in *simplex/saharae* compared with *zarudnyi*, but we have not quantified this and we suspect that it is no more than an average difference, probably subject to quite some overlap, and much dependent on plumage wear at least in *simplex/saharae* (see below).

Differences between females of *zarudnyi* and *simplex/saharae* are, as intimated in the introduction, decidedly more marked than between males of the two populations, because sexual dimorphism in *zarudnyi* is so much reduced (cf Dutch Birding 14: 98, plate 91, 1992). Thus, female *zarudnyi* has a male-like bib and facial mask, albeit slightly browner and reduced compared with males of the same taxon, with the mask scarcely reaching behind the eye (see plate 159 and 171). Females of *simplex/saharae* show no trace of a bib or mask at any season. In underparts pattern too, females of African and Asian populations are similar to their respective males: *zarudnyi* has the entire ventral plumage off-white to grey-white, with some very slight buffish elements, whilst *simplex/saharae* is white with bright or deep buffish elements of variable extent but always far more extensive and noticeable than in *zarudnyi* (see plate 157, 158, 166 and 169). Females of *simplex/saharae* show no trace of a bib or mask at any season. Whereas the upperparts of *simplex/saharae* are buffy-ochre, those of *zarudnyi* are principally pale grey, albeit with some pale buffy elements on the back, scapulars and rump (plate 160, 162 and 167). Some *simplex/saharae*, probably from across the entire continent, show no or almost no trace of dark bases to the greater coverts but this feature is not consistent; females of *zarudnyi* appear to always show a dark greater coverts bar. Furthermore, whilst *simplex/saharae* can possess a generally pale bill (albeit with a darker upper mandible, at least in the breeding season; cf van den Berg & de Roever 1984), that of *zarudnyi* is seemingly always all black (like males) when nesting (see plate 171, and plate 119 in Densley 1990). However, we have also seen photographs of female *simplex/saharae* with all-dark bills.

The statistical analyses revealed that *zarudnyi* is rather well differentiated in size and shape from *simplex/saharae* (figure 1). *Zarudnyi* is significantly different from *simplex/saharae* in measurements, with shorter wings, a longer tail and a smaller bill. These differences also form the basis of the PCA plot (figure 1). The primary and secondary axes of

153-155 Zarudny's Sparrow / Zarudny's Woestijnmus *Passer (simplex) zarudnyi*, holotype (top), and Desert Sparrow / Afrikaanse Woestijnmus *P s saharae*, male, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia (ZISP), July 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan)*.

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the PCA together accounted for 88.3% of the original variation (table 1) whilst character loadings (see table 1) and analysis of morphological data (table 2) provided strong resolution for the separation of *zarudnyi* from *simplex/saharae*.

Range of zarudnyi

The type locality of this taxon is frequently given as 'Transcaspia' following Pleske (eg, Vaurie 1956, Moreau & Greenway 1962, Summers-Smith 1988), but given that the holotype (plate 153-155) and entire series upon which Pleske based his type description of *zarudnyi* are from Penemek (= Repetek), it seems more sensible to delimit the type locality as follows: *Passer simplex zarudnyi* Pleske, 1896, Repetek, Turkmenistan.

A list of 57 specimens of *zarudnyi* and their collection sites was compiled for our research. Four localities could not be located sufficiently precisely to assign them coordinates: two because the specimen labels specified only 'Qara Qum', which refers to the whole desert, and two because the specified locality could not be identified, namely 'Cheshken' which is reportedly close to Bakhardok, another locality from where specimens originate. We are therefore confident that the two or three missing data points would not have changed the distribution map significantly.

Specimen records emanate from two main centres (figure 2). One is in the eastern Karakum around Repetek Biosphere Reserve, which is the single site from where most specimens and sight records come. The second centre is the central Karakum around Bakhardok. There are fewer specimens from the second-named area but it is unclear to what extent this might be an effect of lower observer activity.

Other localities are sparsely distributed, mainly north-east of these two areas in the Kizilkum of Uzbekistan, with a single site mentioned in the literature c 600 km to the south, in Khorasan province in eastern Iran (Zarudny 1903, 1911, Zarudny & Härms 1913). Some confusion has entered the literature, because Zarudny's later report (1916) contradicted some of the others, and because Vaurie (1956) quite erroneously reported these observations as pertaining to Kerman province, with the result that subsequent authors such as Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), Scott et al (1975), Summers-Smith (1988) and Clement et al (1993) have all incorrectly assumed that the taxon does (or did) inhabit the great sand desert, the Dasht-e Lut. That observers such as L Cornwallis in the 1970s and that indefatigable collector of Iranian avifauna,

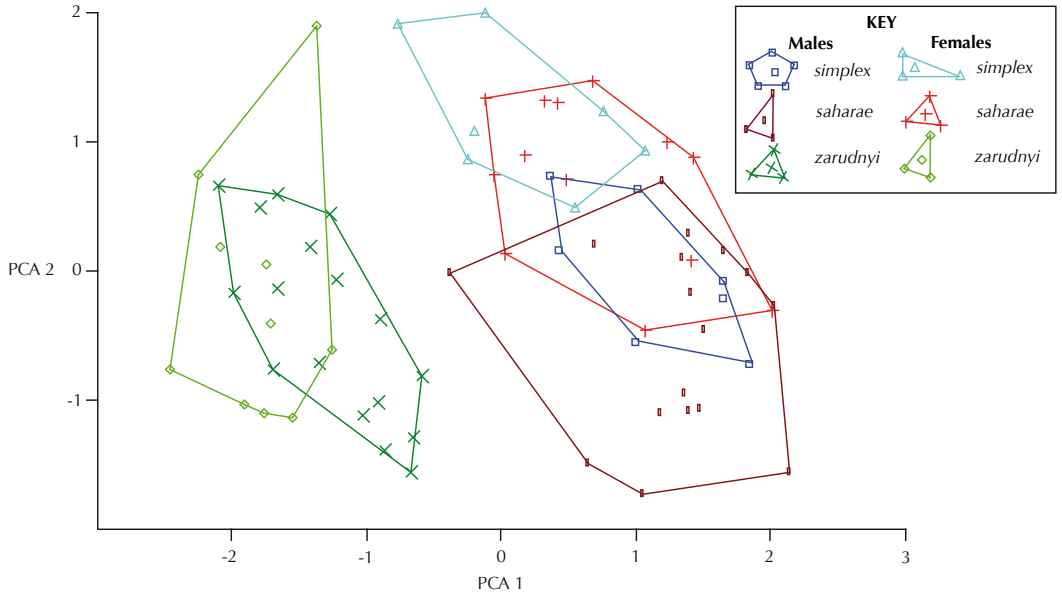


FIGURE 1 Scatter plot diagram of first (PC1) and second (PC2) principal components for a Principal Components Analysis of three morphometric measurements from the three taxa of Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*

W N Koelz, in 1939 to 1946, failed to find *zarudnyi* in Kerman province becomes unsurprising. The lack of subsequent records led Porter et al (1996) to omit any mention of Desert Sparrow for Iran, Hollom et al (1988) not to map the species there, and others such as Dickinson (2003) to question its (continued?) presence in that country.

Zarudny & Härms (1913) mentioned that, on 24 April 1898 (12 days behind modern dating), Zarudny had found *P s zarudnyi* in small numbers in the sand dunes in the region of Sirkuch, Iran, between the villages of Tscharachs (modern-day Shahrakht) and Achangeun (= Ahangharan), in an area amply covered with saxaul trees and lush scrub, but that during their joint journey in 1900 and 1901 they did not find the species (for further details of Zarudny's journeys through Iran, see Roselaar & Aliabadian 2007). However, in 1916 (p 391), Zarudny mentioned that he alone had observed this sparrow on 21 July 1901 (13 days behind modern dating), in the same area as in 1898, between Mohammadabad and Bamrud. Zarudny (1916) also mentioned finding Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* and Pleske's Ground Jay *Podoces pleskei* on the same day and in the same area as the sparrow. Unfortunately, it is unclear as to whether any specimens were obtained. No Zarudny or Härms specimens of this species from Iran are present in some of those collections housing significant parts

TABLE 1 Character loadings on principal component axes for a Principal Component Analysis of four morphological measurements taken from the three taxa of Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*

Variable	**PC1**	**PC2**	**PC3**
Wing length	0.607	-0.518	-0.602
Tail length	-0.454	-0.848	0.272
Culmen length	0.652	-0.108	0.751
Eigenvalue	**1.790**	**0.841**	**0.314**
% variation explained	**60.779**	**28.543**	**10.678**

FIGURE 2 Map showing specimen localities for *Passer simplex zarudnyi* in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

TABLE 2 Morphological comparison between different sexes of *Passer simplex simplex* grouped with *P s saharae* against *P s zarudnyi*. Sample sizes are in parentheses.

	***simplex* / *saharae* ♂♂ (24)**	***zarudnyi* ♂♂ (17)**	**Comparison t-test results**
Wing length	77.63 ± 2.19	72.53 ± 2.02	*P*<0.001
Tail length	57.19 ± 2.26	62.27 ± 2.24	*P*<0.001
Culmen length	13.05 ± 0.59	11.36 ± 0.72	*P*<0.001
	***simplex* / *saharae* ♀♀ (20)**	***zarudnyi* ♀♀ (10)**	**Comparison t-test results**
Wing length	73.68 ± 2.76	71.15 ± 1.03	*P*<0.005
Tail length	54.43 ± 1.83	62.55 ± 4.36	*P*<0.001
Culmen length	12.54 ± 0.49	10.97 ± 0.91	*P*<0.001

of their material (Berlin, Bucharest, New York, St Petersburg, Tashkent, Tring and Vienna: pers obs; Karl Kratochwill in litt 2005; see also Roselaar & Aliabadian 2007). Despite this lack of evidence, it is important to recall that both Zarudny and Härms had a significant body of experience with the species from the Karakum Desert, and we therefore consider that these records can be considered genuine. Subsequent field work in the relevant part of Khorasan province can be deemed relatively minimal; for instance, Derek Scott (a highly experienced field worker who was resident in Iran in the 1970s, and covered much of the country in this period) only skirted the area in question (based on maps of Scott's coverage in GMK's possession).

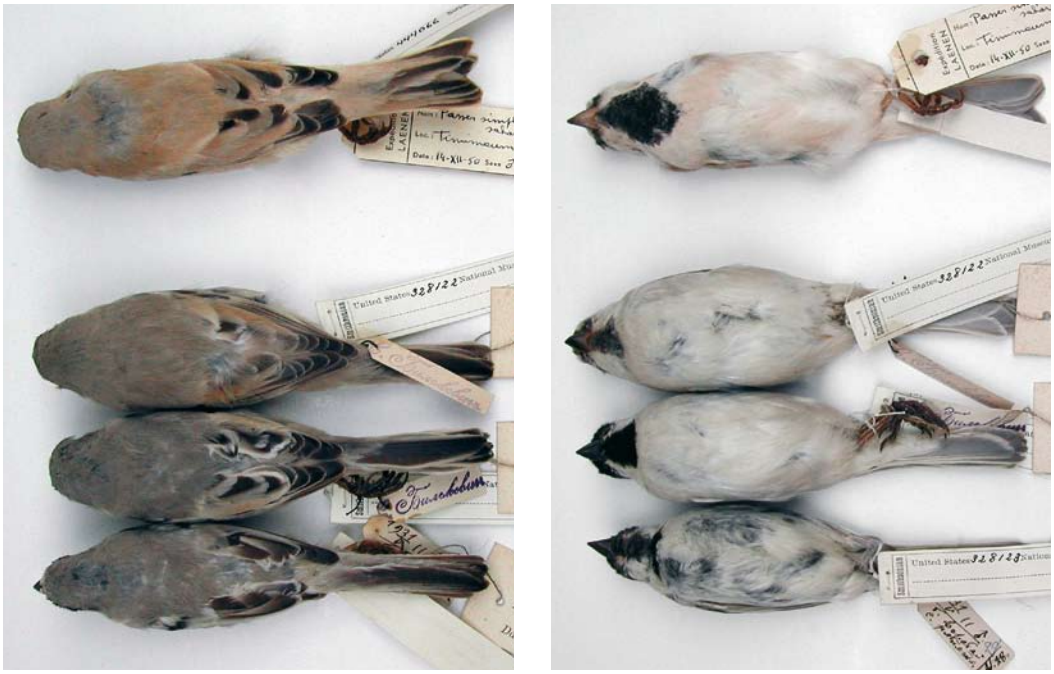
A further record from Iran mentioned in the literature and drawn to our attention by Karl Kratochwill (in litt 2005), seems almost certainly to be mistaken, given that it is far to the west and the observer had presumably no previous experience of the species. Béldi (1918) reported the species in the region of Paradumbe (= Faradonbeh, Esfahan province, 32°02'N, 51°12'E) on 27 June 1916, and mentioned a flight note *tyerr-err-err* (which does not really accord with the European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*-like call attributed to this species in Svensson et al 1999). Two recent reports from Iran have been brought to our attention by Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh (in litt 2008). The species was listed for the Siahkuh region of Yazd province (Irannejad et al 2006) and for Golestan National Park, Gorgan province (Rezaei 2002). However, we have been unable to uncover documentation of any kind for either of these reports, which in consequence we recommend be treated as unconfirmed for now.

The collections included in this study held only two specimens from Uzbekistan. However, many sight records are available from the Kizilkum in Uzbekistan (table 3), all of them from within 75 km of the nearest specimen locality. Most observations were made outside the breeding season but one nest was found, and the majority of these sight records were made in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Subsequent visits to some of the same sites where *zarudnyi* had formerly occurred have yielded no observations, eg, in April 2003 (Steve Rooke in litt) and in May 2007 (A K Filatov per Oleg Mitropolskiy in litt). The site of the most recent observation in Uzbekistan, in June 2007 (see table 3), was revisited by Steve Rooke (in litt 2008) in spring 2008 but he failed to find the species, despite the habitat being obviously suitable. It is possible that *zarudnyi* is, to some extent, 'nomadic'. In general, however, it seems that the taxon's numbers have decreased and/or its range contracted in this region since the 1980s.

From Turkmenistan, we are unaware of any sight records away from areas where *zarudnyi* is documented by specimens. Furthermore, observers have gained the impression that *zarudnyi* has become rarer in Turkmenistan during recent years. Although it was easy to find at Repetek until the early 1990s (eg, Redman 1993a), just as it had been in the 1950s (Vladimir Loskot pers comm), and nests were seen as recently as 1998, visits in May 2001 and 2005 yielded no sightings (Mario

TABLE 3 Field observations of *Passer simplex zarudnyi* in Uzbekistan

Location	**Coordinates**	**Date**	**Remarks**	**Source**
Buzaubay		1975-90	Regularly found in single pairs in spring. Nest found May 1980	Oleg Mitropolskiy in litt, Tret'yakov (1990)
Mulay	40°57'N, 64°35'E	March 1976		Oleg Mitropolskiy in litt
Aktir Well	41°09'N, 64°02'E	March 1980		Oleg Mitropolskiy in litt
Tamdy	41°10'N, 64°36'E	December 1988		Oleg Mitropolskiy in litt
Khoja Davlet	39°18'N, 63°45'E	June 2007	Two males	Maxim Mitropolski in litt



156-157 Zarudny's Sparrows / Zarudny's Woestijnmussen *Passer (simplex) zarudnyi*, two males and female (lower three), and Desert Sparrow / Afrikaanse Woestijnmus *P s saharae*, young male, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA, August 2006 *(Guy M Kirwan)*

158-160 Zarudny's Sparrows / Zarudny's Woestijnmussen *Passer (simplex) zarudnyi*, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia (ZISP), July 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan)*. All specimens from Repetek, Turkmenistan; from left to right: female, male, female and two males.

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161 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum Naturalis, Leiden, Netherlands, July 2008 *(Guy M Kirwan)*. Dorsal comparison of male *P s simplex* (left-hand bird) and *P s saharae* (right-hand two).

162 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum Naturalis, Leiden, Netherlands, July 2008 *(Guy M Kirwan)*. Dorsal comparison of female *P s simplex* (bottom) and *P s saharae* (top).

Camici in litt, Steve Rooke in litt, David Farrow in litt). In spring 2008, Eldar Rustamov (in litt 2008) was unable to find *zarudnyi* during field work in areas formerly inhabited by this species. In the Karakum, *zarudnyi* is said to largely overwinter on the breeding grounds and shows only limited dispersal from mid-August onwards (Snigirewski 1928, Rustamov & Sopyev 1990) and there is some doubt whether the observations from Uzbekistan in the non-breeding season relate to stragglers to the Kizilkum from their breeding grounds in the Karakum. Alternatively, these birds could have derived from a local breeding population in the Kizilkum. If so, the lack of recent observations in this desert might indicate that the population is now extinct, or close to extinction. The only recent documented observation from Uzbekistan comes from close to the Turkmenistan border (see table 3) and was thought to involve birds from the Karakum.

Vocalisations of zarudnyi

We have noted the following statements in the literature concerning the voice of *zarudnyi*, which might enable future workers to prove or deny differences in the vocalisations of African and Asian populations. Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) stated that the 'voice sharply differs from twitter of most sparrows, and in the opinion of Zarudny (1896) it resembles a European Goldfinch's *Carduelis carduelis* voice, but Shestoporov (1934) states that its trill is very diversified; certain sounds emitted by Desert Sparrow, however, resemble twitter of House Sparrow.' Snigirewski (1928) also wrote that the call is similar to that of a European Goldfinch.

Moult of zarudnyi

Very little has been published concerning this facet of the life history of *zarudnyi*. According to Dementiev & Gladkov (1954), post-breeding moult commences in late July or early August and is completed by the end of the month or by early September. Those adults collected around Repetek between 19 and 29 August 1925 by Snigirewski were still moulting their remiges and rectrices (with the outermost primary not yet renewed) but had already freshly moulted body plumage (Snigirewski 1928). As noted by Kees (C S) Roselaar in Cramp & Perrins (1994) and Shirihai & Svensson (in prep), the plumage of African males undergoes quite some seasonal change. Our examination of specimens of *zarudnyi* suggests that females certainly possess more well-defined and striking bibs and facial masks in the breeding season, as a result of wear, than following post-nuptial moult, when fresh (plate 158-160), but differences between males at these seasons seem less striking than might be expected compared with those in *simplex/saharae*. Further research into these issues is required.

Breeding biology of zarudnyi

Nesting ecology is an often undervalued means of resolving taxonomic problems in ornithology (Löhrl & Thaler 1992, Castell & Kirwan 2005). Published data on the breeding behaviour of both *zarudnyi* and *saharae* are reasonably extensive (eg, Hartert 1913, Heim de Balsac 1929, Sopyev 1965, Bundy & Morgan 1969, Ponomareva 1983, Summers-Smith 1988, Densley 1990, Rustamov & Sopyev 1990, Tret'yakov 1990, Cramp & Perrins 1994, Harrison & Castell 2002). From the available data it is not possible to determine any significant differences between the African and Asian populations that might have a genetic basis. For instance, although it appears that Asian birds are less diverse in their selection of nest sites than African populations, this presumably reflects only the relative availability of, for instance, suitable trees in the two ranges and cannot be considered taxonomically informative. Nonetheless, further work on their eggs and nestlings might bring rewards (a description of the nestling of *saharae* was presented by Densley 1990).

Subspecies in Africa

The type locality of *simplex* is Ambukol (= Ambikol), Dongola, on the Nile, Sudan. In this part of the species' range, it went unrecorded between 1868 and c 1935, and indeed none of the c 10 records in the 20th century was published until almost the end of the century (Nikolaus 1987, Ash & Nikolaus 1991). The most recent records in the country were probably those of the last-named authors, in 1986. It was apparently once widespread in Sudan, as 19th century specimens are available from as far south as Sennar, on the Blue Nile, the Red Sea coast at Suakim (= Suakin) and west to the Libyan border (Cave & Macdonald 1955, Nikolaus 1987, Ash & Nikolaus 1991), although the latter work makes obvious that the majority of records are from the central west of the country.

P s saharae was described by Erlanger (1899) from the Tunisian Sahara (its type locality was subsequently more precisely identified as Jebel Dekanis; see Summers-Smith 1988). He considered the new form to principally differ from nominate *simplex* by the male having much darker grey upperparts, with a hint of brown, sandy-yellow

underparts, and weaker black around the eye, whilst the female was described as being overall darker coloured with a weakly developed dark wing pattern. Erlanger considered that in measurements *simplex* is larger than *saharae*.

With the subsequent discovery of new populations of *Passer simplex* sensu lato elsewhere in the Sahara came problems of subspecific identification, especially as the only 'Nubian' material (ie, from the type locality region of *simplex*) was already very old. Thus, specimens from the Aïr massif, Niger, were classed as *saharae* by Hartert (1921) but considered to be intermediate albeit closer to *simplex* by Vaurie (1956), who elected to consider them as best referred to nominate *simplex*. Niethammer (1955) believed that the population he discovered in the Ennedi massif, Chad, approached *simplex*, and Vaurie (1956) concurred. In electing to recognize subspecific differences between southern and eastern (*simplex*) versus northern and western (*saharae*) populations, Fry & Keith (2004) most recently summarise the differences between them as follows: nominate *simplex* is on average smaller, eg, in wing length, with, in males, slightly darker and buff-tinged upperparts and a more pinkish-buff wash to the less creamy underparts, and in females browner-tinged upperparts and more cinnamon-buff underparts (plate 161-162 compare the upperparts coloration of both sexes of nominate *simplex* and *saharae*, illustrating these marginal differences). As highlighted in the introductory paragraphs, others have disagreed in the distinction of the two subspecies in Africa: Bannerman (1948) felt that a specimen from Chad might be considered identical to Algerian specimens, whilst Summers-Smith (1988) thought it best not to admit *saharae* until such time as fresh material from the Ennedi became available (at that time prevailing wisdom was that *simplex* was no longer extant in Sudan). Much earlier, Hartert (1921) had also expressed doubts as to the need to recognize more than one subspecies in Africa.

Dickinson (2003) considers those populations in Mauritania, Algeria, southern Tunisia and west-

163-165 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, males, Natural History Museum, Tring, England, February 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan/© Natural History Museum)*. Comparison of specimens from ranges generally ascribed to *P s simplex* and *P s saharae*, as follows: *saharae* (Libya, May); *saharae* (Algeria, February); *simplex* (Mali, September); *saharae* (Algeria, April); *saharae* (Libya, April); *saharae* (Libya, April); and *saharae* (Libya, April). Note that three right-hand specimens were all originally attributed to *simplex*, although they come from part of the species' range ascribed to *saharae* by modern works (eg, Dickinson 2003, Fry & Keith 2004). Based on relative saturation of their upperparts and underparts colorations, these attributions appear unsurprising.


Passer simplex
Passer simplex

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Passer simplex
Passer simplex

166-167 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, females, Natural History Museum, Tring, England, February 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan/© Natural History Museum)*. Comparison of specimens from ranges generally ascribed to *P s simplex* and *P s saharae*, as follows: *simplex* (Mali, September); *saharae* (Algeria, April); *saharae* (Libya, April); and *saharae* (Libya, April). Note that Mali specimen was originally labelled as *saharae*, and two Libyan specimens were attributed to *simplex*. Based on relative saturation of their upperparts and underparts colorations, these attributions appear unsurprising.

168 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, Natural History Museum, Tring, England, February 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan/© Natural History Museum)*. Ventral comparison of saturation in three specimens of *P s simplex* from Mali. From top to bottom: female (September), female (September) and young male (September). Similar variation can be seen in upperparts coloration of specimens from Mali.

169 Desert Sparrows / Afrikaanse Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, Natural History Museum, Tring, England, February 2007 *(Guy M Kirwan/© Natural History Museum)*. Ventral comparison of saturation in specimens from range of *P s saharae*. From left to right: Libya (April), Libya (September), Libya (April) and Algeria (April). Similar variation can be seen in upperparts coloration of specimens from the same regions.

ern Libya as pertaining to *saharae* (south-eastern Morocco was inadvertently omitted from the species' range but birds there plainly should be considered within this subspecies), whilst nominate *simplex* occurs in the southern Sahara, with disjunct populations in central Mali, northern Chad (in the Tibesti), and north-western and central Sudan. Fry & Keith (2004) are in general agreement with this delimitation of the two subspecies' ranges but note the presence of *simplex* in several suitable areas of Niger, being most abundant in the Aïr and Tenéré ranges, as well as the availability of two records in extreme south-western Egypt, from two localities in the Gebel (Jebel) Uweinat region in October-December 1968 (cf Goodman & Meininger 1989). Since the publication of the final volume of *The birds of Africa*, Clouet & Goar (2008) have reported the species' presence in north-eastern Mali, in Adrar des Ifôghas (spelling follows the Times Atlas), and S Darling (in Demey 2003) claimed a new record in Egypt, at Farafra Oasis in the Western Desert (c 27°00'N, 28°00'E), on 14 February 2003, following strong winds from the south-west. For now, the available evidence suggests that the species is at most only an occasional visitor to Egypt, presumably involving the nominate race (on purely geographical grounds).

Two distinct problems have dogged all previous attempts (and the present effort) to adequately discuss this issue. Paramount is the incredible paucity of material from the type locality region (Vaurie examined just two specimens, as have we, in RMNH) and its considerable age (the type specimens are almost 200 years old). Second is the wide scatter of available material from elsewhere in the Sahara, albeit with few detailed collections from single localities or regions (one exception is the Fezzan, Libya, material held at NHM), which prevents robust comparisons of long series' of birds of similar age, sex and wear. Furthermore, one might expect local variations in ground colour of either (or both) the dorsal or ventral surfaces due to soil colour.

Whilst acknowledging the ostensible plumage differences between north-west African birds and those from 'Nubia', it is also true that specimens from elsewhere in the species' North African range possess the features attributed to nominate *simplex* (eg, the depth of the upperparts and underparts coloration in both sexes), eg, from Mali (generally considered to be within the range of nominate *simplex*) but also from southern and western Libya (generally attributed to *saharae*). Some of these specimens are illustrated in plate 163-169. Other specimens, from Mali and Libya, seem more typical of *saharae*, and were often collected in the same season. One might therefore deem these populations to be somewhat intermediate, agreeing with Niethammer (1955) and Vaurie (1956). On balance, we feel that more work is needed to validate *saharae* and that, under the terms of reference adopted here for subspecies recognition, the taxon probably fails to meet the requirements of diagnosability. However, a definitive resolution to the problem ironically most depends on appropriate field work and collecting in the politically unstable areas in the east of the species' African range. One unforeseen consequence of such work, if *saharae* is confirmed to be valid, might be to redraw the boundaries between the two African subspecies.

In recent years, it has been suggested on several occasions that some populations of *saharae* in south-eastern Morocco (especially during the last five years) and southern Algeria may be decreasing (Densley 1990, Summers-Smith 1990, van den Berg & Haas 2008, 2009), although Thévenot et al (2003) did not appear to share such concerns with respect to the former country.

Taxonomy and status of *zarudnyi*

If we accept the premise of Hall & Moreau (1970) that Desert Sparrow represents a member of the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* superspecies, then the unique morphology of *zarudnyi* (ie, much-reduced sexual dimorphism) demands renewed interpretation. This characteristic, as noted in the introductory paragraphs, is highly unusual within the genus *Passer* as a whole. Summers-Smith (1988) dismisses the notion that African and Asian populations may have evolved separately from *domesticus*, preferring the theory that the distribution of proto-*simplex* was formerly more widespread, but the central population became extinct. This question almost certainly requires robust molecular sampling to answer. We understand that genetic material pertaining to the African population is available (Urban Olsson in litt 2007) and we urge enterprising field workers in the species' Asian range to resolve the other part of this jigsaw. Nonetheless, we speculate that the long drought known as the Messinian Crisis, which peaked some 5.5-8.5 million years ago and which led to the entire Irano-Turanian region becoming extremely dry and to the Mediterranean shrinking in size (Suc 1984, Tchernov 1988), may have played an important role in the biogeography and systematics of Saharo-Sindian birds. Thus, Shirihai et al (2001) separated African Desert Warbler *Sylvia deserti* and Asian Desert Warbler *S nana*, Kirwan et al (2006) detailed the possibility that Asian Crimson-

170 Zarudny's Sparrow / Zarudny's Woestijnmus *Passer (simplex) zarudnyi*, male, Repetek, Turkmenistan, May 1993 *(Marc Raes)*

171 Zarudny's Sparrow / Zarudny's Woestijnmus *Passer (simplex) zarudnyi*, female, Repetek, Turkmenistan, May 1993 *(Marc Raes)*

winged Finch *Rhodopechys sanguineus* and African Crimson-winged Finch *R alienus* deserve species status, and Kirwan & Shirihai (2006) recommended specific status for Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* (= Striated Bunting; cf Redactie Dutch Birding 2009) (in Asia and east Africa) and House Bunting *E sahari* (elsewhere in Africa) (cf van den Berg 2008).

Because of the striking differences in size between African and Asian populations, the relative lack of sexual dimorphism in the populations inhabiting the former region, and the more limited but still clear morphological differences between either sex of the two populations, we recommend that Desert Sparrow be henceforth (also) treated as two species. These characters certainly meet the requirements for species status under any of the pattern-defined (phylogenetic) species concepts currently operative (Sluys & Hazevoet 1999). In particular, the much-reduced sexual dimorphism in *zarudnyi* argues strongly that African and Asian populations might well function as separate biological species too, as their quite different female plumages could serve as a barrier to interbreeding in the hypothetical context of their meeting. *P s zarudnyi* differs from African populations in plumage and structure, which can be considered characters related to different functional contexts, whilst differences in bill structure might point to an ecological segregation.

P simplex (including *P s saharae*) might retain the vernacular name Desert Sparrow, as it is the population with which far more ornithologists and birders are familiar, whilst for *P zarudnyi* we recommend the English name Zarudny's Sparrow, which not only echoes the scientific name but also pays tribute to one of the greatest ornithological explorers of Central Asia. Taxa currently held valid commemorating Zarudny number but four (Dickinson 2003), including 'his' sparrow. Like Beaman (1994) and Ferguson-Lees & Christie (2001), we bemoan the modern trend, most prevalent in North America, to 'reject' eponyms for English names, eg, on the spurious grounds of not offending non-English speakers (King 1997). In upholding our view, we recall the words of Vaurie (1963), 'Zarudny … made the greatest contribution to our knowledge of the birds of Iran'.

With respect to the current population of *zarudnyi*, it is pertinent to recall that the supposed 'nomadic' tendencies of Desert Sparrow sensu lato have led to the species going unrecorded, or virtually so, for many years in parts of its African range, especially the east (Ash & Nikolaus 1991), but also the much better-known western range (Summers-Smith 1988). Therefore, caution is required in examining the status of *zarudnyi* in its much more poorly covered range. This sparrow may have always been rare overall, which led even early authors to consider that it might be at risk from extinction (Serebrowskij 1928, cited in Rustamov & Sopyev 1990). However, whilst the data are still very scanty, all of the available information is suggestive of a decrease in the population of *zarudnyi*, potentially coupled with a decline in its range, during recent years. It therefore seems appropriate to sound the first 'alarm bells' for this taxon. Its status and numbers are curiously enigmatic and require much more careful investigation and monitoring than has been possible to date. We suspect that it

172 Desert Sparrow / Afrikaanse Woestijnmus *Passer simplex saharae*, female, Merzouga, Tafilalt, Morocco, 30 March 2004 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)*

qualifies for Red Data listing, given that its core range is now potentially rather small and shows evidence of having declined in recent decades.

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Samenvatting

TAXONOMIE, HERKENNING EN STATUS VAN WOESTIJNMUSSEN

Woestijnmus *Passer simplex* omvat drie ondersoorten: *P s simplex* (Noordoost-Afrika), *P s saharae* (Noordwest-Afrika) en *P s zarudnyi* (Centraal-Azië, voornamelijk in Turkmenistan maar ook in Oezbekistan en (met onduidelijke status) in Iran). In de literatuur bestaat al lange tijd discussie over de vraag of de Afrikaanse populaties wellicht tot één ondersoort behoren en of de Afrikaanse en Aziatische woestijnmussen als aparte soorten beschouwd moeten worden. Voor dit artikel zijn aan de hand van museummateriaal van de drie taxa maten en verenkleedkenmerken vergeleken. Mannetjes van *zarudnyi* verschillen van *simplex/saharae* door een opvallender en zwarter masker en grijzere bovendelen (vooral stuit); ook het patroon van de bovenvleugeldekveren verschilt en de onderdelen zijn wat bleker en witter. De verschillen tussen vrouwtjes *zarudnyi* en *simplex/saharae* zijn veel opvallender omdat de seksuele dimorfie bij *zarudnyi* heel gering is. Vrouwtjes *zarudnyi* hebben een mannetjesachtige bef en masker. Ook wat betreft de onderdelen lijken vrouwtjes *zarudnyi* en *simplex/saharae* op de respectievelijke mannetjes: bij *zarudnyi* geheel vuilwit tot grijswit met enkele iets zeemkleurige elementen, bij *simplex/saharae* wit met lichte of diep zeemkleurige elementen van variabele omvang maar altijd veel uitgebreider dan bij *zarudnyi*. De bovendelen van *simplex/saharae* zijn zeemkleurig-oker, die van *zarudnyi* voornamelijk lichtgrijs (met enige zeemkleurige elementen op rug, stuit en schouderveren). Vrouwtjes *zarudnyi* lijken altijd een donkere vleugelstreep op de grote dekveren te vertonen. Statistische analyse van de maten toont aan dat *zarudnyi* vrij goed is te onderscheiden van *simplex/saharae* in grootte en bouw, met kortere vleugels, langere staart en kleinere snavel. Tevens worden enkele (literatuur)gegevens over rui, vocalisaties en broedbiologie van *zarudnyi* bijeengebracht.

Van *zarudnyi* zijn alle vindplaatsen in kaart gebracht. De museumexemplaren van *zarudnyi* zijn voornamelijk afkomstig van twee verspreidingscentra in Turkmenistan: ***1*** rond Repetek, oostelijke Karakum (hier komen de meeste vandaan en zijn ook de meeste waarnemingen gedaan); en ***2*** rond Bakhardok, centrale Karakum. Er is een handvol meldingen bekend van Iran (twee recente), die echter niet goed zijn gedocumenteerd. Omdat *zarudnyi* als eerste door de ervaren ornitholoog N Zarudny werd gemeld rekenen we het taxon wel tot de Iraanse avifauna. Over de precieze locaties van zijn waarnemingen bestaat in de literatuur echter grote verwarring.

Er wordt voorgesteld om *zarudnyi* als aparte soort te beschouwen onder het fylogenetische soortconcept ('Zarudny's Woestijnmus'). Ook onder het biologische soortconcept verdient deze split de voorkeur gezien de duidelijke verschillen tussen vrouwtjes *zarudnyi* en *simplex/saharae* die onderlinge kruising waarschijnlijk bemoeilijkt of voorkomt. De beschikbare informatie lijkt aan te tonen dat *zarudnyi* in aantal achteruitgaat en bij soortstatus lijkt plaatsing op de Rode Lijst gerechtvaardigd. Over de taxonomische benaming van veel populaties in de Sahara bestaat in de literatuur geen overeenstemming. Van veel populaties zijn slechts weinig museumexemplaren beschikbaar, vooral uit Oost-Afrika. Morfologische verschillen tussen de Afrikaanse populaties worden besproken en op basis van de aanzienlijke individuele (en niet geografische) variatie is te concluderen dat voor deze populaties met één wetenschappelijke naam kan worden volstaan.

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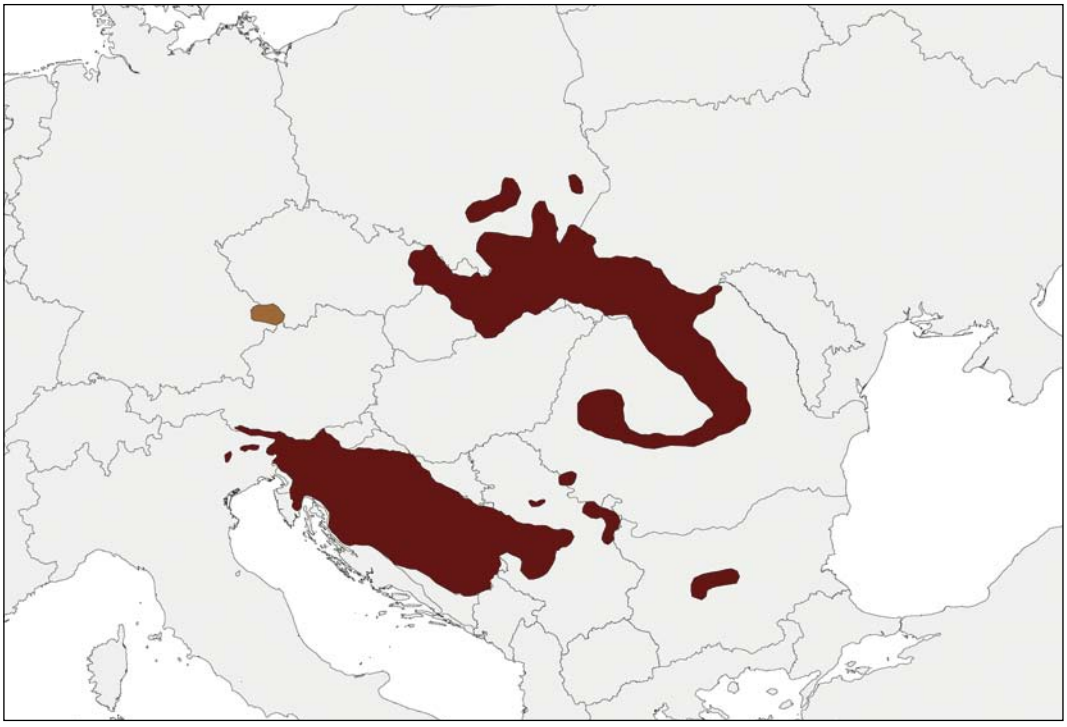
Melanism and plumage variation in *macroura* Ural Owl

Al Vrezec

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* is a northern boreal species with a large continuous Palearctic breeding range extending from Fennoscandia in the west across Russia to the Pacific coast of Siberia, Korea and Japan in the east. According to fossil remains, it was more widespread in glacial times (eg, Scherzinger 2006). Today, there are at least three isolated southern populations regarded as glacial relicts which are clearly distinguished from the northern birds in size and morphology: in central and south-eastern Europe, in China and in Japan. In the mountains of central and south-eastern Europe, the subspecies *S u macroura* (hereafter *macroura*) occurs; the Carpathian *S u 'carpathica'* and Central-European *S u 'sumaviensis'* can not clearly be separated morphologically from *macroura* and are therefore regarded as synonyms (Kohl 1977, cf König et al 1999). The Chinese population is also treated as a single subspecies, *S u davidi* (hereafter *davidi*) and, in recent taxonomic studies, has been regarded as a separate species, Sichuan Wood Owl *S davidi* (eg, del Hoyo et al 1999, König et al 1999), although morphological and bioacoustic studies did not support specific separation from Ural Owl (Scherzinger & Fang 2006). Japanese Ural Owls are the smallest and comprise c three recognized subspecies (cf del Hoyo et al 1999, König et al 1999): *S u fuscescens*, *S u hondoensis* (including *'momiyamae'*) and *S u japonica* (König et al 1999 also include *japonica* in *hondoensis*). The other, northern, subspecies are nominate *S u uralensis* (eastern Russia;

FIGURE 1 Distribution of Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owl *Strix uralensis macroura* according to currently available data (population in Bohemian Forest on borders of Austria, Czech Republic and Germany is introduced)



including '*buturlini*'); *S u liturata* (northern Europe to the Baltic region, and east to the Volga river; the statement in König et al (1999) that this subspecies occurs in 'eastern Alps and Carpathians' is incorrect); *S u yenisseensis* (Central Siberian plateau); and *S u nikolskii* (Transbaikalia north to Sachalin, Russia, and south to Korea; including '*daurica*', '*tatibanai*' and '*coreensis*').

One of the characteristics of the isolated subspecies *macroura* are the dark or almost black individuals that occur sporadically over the whole range from the Carpathian mountains to the Dinaric Alps (Kohl 1977). This feature appears to be unique for this subspecies since no such dark individuals have been reported from other parts of the range of Ural Owl.

The melanistic individuals found relatively frequently in *macroura* have only been treated briefly in the context of taxonomic differentiation from other Ural Owl subspecies (eg, Kohl 1977, Mikkola 1983, König et al 1999). The overall colour variability, including the gradient of colour morphs from pale to melanistic, has not yet been studied in detail. As a consequence, there is still very little data available about this subject. The aim of this paper is to review current knowledge about the plumage variation in populations of *macroura*, with special emphasis on melanism.

Material and methods

This paper presents a review of current knowledge of colour morphs and more specifically of melanism in *macroura*, including results of previous published studies and additional studies of museum skins at the Slovenian Museum of Natural History in Ljubljana, Slovenia, birds found dead, field studies in a breeding population in Slovenia, and on photographic material collected in Slovenia. The plumage coloration variation was established by studies of museum skins and dead birds as well as numerous photographs, from which also the drawings of the four colour morphs (figure 2) were prepared. For the whole range of *macroura*, rough estimations of the proportion of melanistic owls in the population based on museum collections have been published (eg, Ponebšek 1917, Kohl 1977, Vrezec & Tutiš 2003). These studies made distinction between melanistic and non-melanistic birds but not between the two intermediate morphs (see below). However, these proportions were only useful for relative comparisons between different regions because museum collections are not the best reference for estimating the proportion of melanistic individuals. The reason for this is that the provenance of birds collected may not be an even representation of the different populations as collectors tend to pay more attention to aberrant or rare birds than to 'normal' birds. In the present study, I have therefore estimated the proportion of the four colour morphs in the (sub)population of *macroura* in Slovenia in the wild. To get unbiased proportion estimations, I have included the following data into the study: ***1*** museum skins (only birds that were found dead in the field, ie, by passive collecting); ***2*** data from breeding biology studies in the field; and ***3*** photographs taken in the wild with location details given.

In this paper, a new up-to-date distribution map of *macroura* is given. The map is based on recently published data but also some overlooked studies from the southern Dinaric part of the distribution were included, especially in former Yugoslavia (Reiser 1939, Obratil 1977, Pietiäinien & Saurola 1997, Rašajski & Vučanović 1998, Tomiałojč & Stawarczyk 2003, Novčić 2004, Vrezec & Tutiš 2003, Feldner et al 2006, Genero & Benussi 2007, Krištin et al 2007, Lukač 2007, Vrezec 2007).

Population and distribution of *macroura*

According to the most recent estimations, the population size of *macroura* is 4200-6500 breeding pairs (cf Mebs 2007). The northernmost part of the breeding range is southern Poland from where it is distributed across the Carpathian mountains to the south-east. In Romania, Ural Owl is still common but further south and west it becomes scarcer. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, it is currently considered to be rare. The status is uncertain in Greece, Macedonia and Montenegro. The taxon is common in Croatia and Slovenia (Vrezec & Tutiš 2003). The westernmost part of the distribution is in north-eastern Italy and southern Austria, where a few pairs have been found recently (Feldner et al 2006, Genero & Benussi 2007). In the Bohemian Forest covering parts of Austria, the Czech Republic and Germany, Ural Owl became extinct in 1926 but reintroduction took place from 1970 onwards (Scherzinger 2006). Since the core area of *macroura* is confined to the Carpathian mountains and Dinaric Alps, the subspecies *macroura* can be referred to as 'Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owl'. The largest part of the Carpathian-Dinaric population breeds in high elevated montane forests, predominantly in mixed forests but also in a few lowland deciduous forest fragments (especially oak) in Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia (Rašajski & Vučanović 1998, Vrezec & Tutiš 2003, Krištin et al 2007).






173 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis liturata*, southern Finland, 19 April 2008 *(Al Vrezec)*. Pale facial disk is typical for northern subspecies of Ural Owl. **174** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis* '*momiyamae*' (included in *S u hondoensis*), Honshu, Japan, 17 April 2004 *(Aki Higuchi)*. In eastern part of range, southern Ural Owls are darker and more brownish than northern subspecies. **175** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 6 April 2007 *(Al Vrezec)*. Facial disk of pale morph. **176** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 11 May 2007 *(Andrej Kapla)*. Grey morph individual with prominent circumocular barring. **177** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 6 June 2007 *(Andrej Kapla)*. Facial disk of melanistic morph. **178** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 20 November 2004 *(Al Vrezec)*. Facial disk of melanistic morph; very dark individual with almost blackish facial disk.

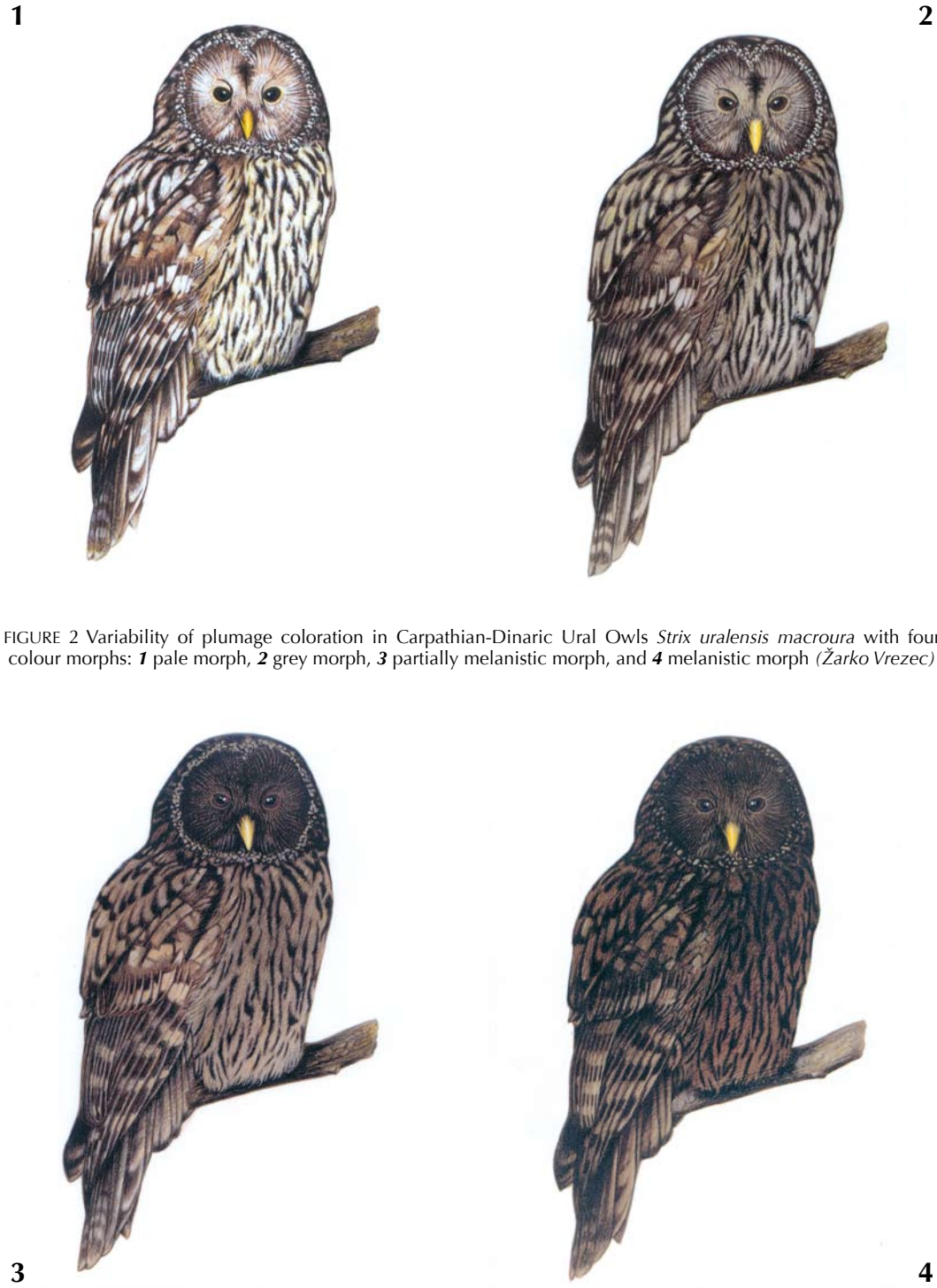


FIGURE 2 Variability of plumage coloration in Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owls *Strix uralensis macroura* with four colour morphs: ***1*** pale morph, ***2*** grey morph, ***3*** partially melanistic morph, and ***4*** melanistic morph *(Žarko Vrezec)*

Plumage coloration in subspecies of Ural Owl

Northern Ural Owls (eg, Fennoscandian subspecies *S u liturata*) are generally very pale with strongly contrasting black streaks on flanks and head. The facial disk is pale, almost white. The back and wings are more greyish but still a contrasting black-and-white pattern is prominent. There are no records of very dark or melanistic individuals and even birds with a darker or blackish facial disk are extremely rare in *liturata* (Pertti Saurola pers comm). The other northern subspecies, eg, nominate *uralensis*, are reported to be even paler (Kohl 1977, Mikkola 1983). However, also in northern populations some colour variation is noted, described as 'light' and 'dark' morphs in König et al (1999). In *liturata* from Finland, I noted that besides very pale individuals with a whitish facial disk ('pale morph'), some birds have a more greyish facial disk ('dark morph'), but in general birds are still very pale compared with *macroura*.

In southern populations, Ural Owls are generally darker than in northern. In the eastern part of the range, they are more brownish (König et al 1999) than in the western. Birds belonging to *davidi* in China are dark brown with blackish-brown scapulars, unicoloured brownish-black central tail-feathers and a dark facial disk (Scherzinger & Fang 2006). Japanese Ural Owls are paler than *davidi* with greyish-brown feathers and a darker facial disk and the pattern on the upperparts shows less contrast compared with the northern subspecies. In the western part of the range (*macroura*), birds are dark greyish. However, the colour pattern in *macroura* varies strongly, from very pale to completely dark chocolate-brown, almost black, with intermediate variations (see below).

Morphological characteristics of *macroura*

Individuals of *macroura* are the largest among Ural Owl subspecies. The wing length is 354-415 mm, much larger compared with the northern subspecies (310-396 mm), Japanese subspecies (259-347 mm) or *davidi* (371-372 mm; König et al 1999, Scherzinger & Fang 2006). *Macroura* has slight barring in the facial disk around the eyes, resembling Great Grey Owl *S nebulosa* but not so distinct (circumocular barring is present also in *davidi*). However, this pattern is reported to be absent in c 10% of the individuals and can be found in some individuals from the northern subspecies as well (Kohl 1977). In my data set from Slovenia, circumocular barring was absent in c 14% (n=22) of individuals, excluding melanistic birds, where this barring is not visible anyway (table 1). The general impression of *macroura* compared with the northern subspecies is formed by the larger size, longer tail and darker plumage with less contrasting patterns.

In *macroura*, based on my studies, four (or more) colour morphs can be separated. Of these, the two extreme morphs can be easily distinguished, the 'pale' and the 'melanistic' morph. The latter refers to individuals with a very dark, almost black facial disk and dark chocolate-brown plumage with a much subdued streaking pattern and with an almost blackish appearance in the field. These are the two outermost morphs in a cline of plumage coloration. In general, at least two other, intermediate morphs can be distinguished, the 'grey' and the 'partially melanistic' morphs. The grey morph is represented by darker grey individuals in which the pattern of streaking is still prominent. In partially melanistic individuals, usually the head and facial disk are dark blackish as in completely melanistic birds but the rest of the body is paler, although the degree varies strongly between individuals. According to my study of museum skins and field observations, general estimations indicate that partially melan-

TABLE 1 Proportion of four colour morphs in the population of Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owl *Strix uralensis macroura* in Slovenia, and frequency of presence of circumocular barring in each morph

colour morph	% in population	frequency of circumocular barring
pale	23.1%	57.1%
grey	64.1%	100.0%
partially melanistic	2.6%	0.0%
melanistic	10.3%	0.0%
n	39	26

TABLE 2 Proportion of melanistic, including partially melanistic, individuals in museum collections across distribution range of Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owl *Strix uralensis macroura* (after published sources: Kohl 1977, Vrezec & Tutiš 2003)

region	% of melanistic individuals	number of inspected birds
North Carpathians	40.0% (n=10)	25
Hungary	6.7% (n=4)	60
Romania	2.6% (n=5)	194
former Yugoslavia	21.0% (n=20)	95
Slovenia and Croatia	14.9% (n=22)	148

179 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 6 April 2007 *(Andrej Kapla)*.
Wing of pale morph.

180 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 11 May 2007 *(Andrej Kapla)*.
Wing of grey morph.

181 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 6 June 2007 *(Andrej Kapla)*.
Wing of melanistic morph.

182 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 20 November 2004 *(Al Vrezec)*.
Wing of melanistic morph. Very dark individual.

183 Variability of barring pattern on central tail-feathers in Ural Owls *Strix uralensis macroura (Al Vrezec)*. Note that on the right feather from dark melanistic morph individual barring pattern is greatly reduced due to increase of melanin.

istic birds are the rarest and individuals of the pale morph and grey morph are the most common (table 1). Because the plumage variation from pale to dark is clinal, the number of distinguishable morphs is difficult to define and the four morphs proposed here and their demarcation must be considered somewhat arbitrary.

FIGURE 3 First published illustration of melanistic morph of Carpathian-Dinaric Ural Owl *Strix uralensis macroura* given by Hacquet (1791) and described as '*Strix nigra*'

The first identification step to attribute an individual bird to one of the four morphs is the determination of the colour of the facial disk, which can be separated into three groups: ***1*** whitish (pale with very little dark marks resembling pale northern subspecies, eg, *liturata*; occurs in pale morph); ***2*** greyish (grey facial disk, which is in some birds very prominent since on photographs the colour of feathers on belly and flanks can be very variable due to the light conditions during photographing and are therefore an unreliable indication for identification; occurs in grey morph); and ***3*** dark (dark brown or blackish facial disk; occurs in partially melanistic morph and melanistic morph). The second identification step is to separate partially melanistic from melanistic birds, for which the colour of body plumage is important (the colour pattern of wings was not considered since also in melanistic birds wings still have bright spots): ***1*** the whole body is dark brown with less prominent black streaks (melanistic morph), and ***2*** some parts of the body, especially distal parts from the head, are brighter with prominent black streaking (partially melanistic morph).

Between different morphs, the colour of the bright yellow bill is not variable, although its appearance is clearly more noticeable in dark individuals because of the stronger contrast with the surrounding dark feathers. The characteristic feather wreath around the facial disk is distinct in

184 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 14 December 2007 *(Miha Krofel)*. Pale morph individual. **185** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, near Krakow, Poland, 2 May 2008 *(Chris van Rijswijk/birdshooting.nl)*. Partially melanistic morph individual. Appearance of partially melanistic or melanistic morph birds is almost blackish in the field. **186** Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, near Krakow, Poland, 2 May 2008 *(Chris van Rijswijk/birdshooting.nl)*. Grey morph individual.

187 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 21 May 2008 *(Al Vrezec)*. Fledgling of partially melanistic or melanistic morph, with no visible bars on back or belly and with dark facial disk.

188 Ural Owl / Oeraluil *Strix uralensis macroura*, central Slovenia, 21 May 2008 *(Al Vrezec)*. Fledgling of pale or grey morph, with well distinguishable barring pattern on back and belly.

individuals of the pale and grey morphs, much less so in partially melanistic birds and almost imperceptible in melanistic individuals. The circumocular barring is present only in pale and grey morph individuals but not in melanistic birds. I have found that circumocular barring is present in all grey morph owls but is absent in c 43% of pale morph individuals (table 1). The increase of pigments (melanin) is shown also in the barring pattern of the primaries and secondaries, with the dark bars generally being larger in melanistic individuals than in pale or grey birds. Also in the tail-feathers, especially the pair of central feathers, only a few pale patches with no clear barring pattern are present in melanistic individuals. Similar almost unicoloured central tail-feathers are also found in *davidi* (Scherzinger & Fang 2006).

The different colour morphs are distinguishable already in downy fledglings, especially between paler (pale, grey) and darker (partially melanistic, melanistic) morphs. Melanistic young have dark blackish down with no visible bars on the back or on the belly and have a darker facial disk.

Melanism in *macroura*

The first mention and published figure of a melanistic morph Ural Owl dates back to the 18th century when Hacquet (1791) described owls found in the Carpathian mountains as '*Strix nigra*' (figure 3). He correctly identified these dark owls as Ural Owls, referring to the studies of Giovanni Antonio (Ioannis Antonii) Scopoli from Slovenia, who described these birds as '*Strix sylvestris*' (Scopoli 1769, Vrezec et al in press). Later, melanistic morph Ural Owls were found to occur over the whole Carpathian-Dinaric distribution range but according to museum collections, dark individuals are more common in the southern part (Kohl 1977; table 2). From the field, only data from the recent intensive studies of breeding pairs in the Dinaric Alps in Croatia and Slovenia are available, revealing that the proportion of partially melanistic morph and melanistic morph individuals (taken together) is c 6% in the wild (n=54; Vrezec & Tutiš 2003). Considering additional data from Slovenia collected for this study, my conclusion is that the proportion of partially melanistic and melanistic individuals is 5-15% in the wild, but can vary locally.

It seems that Ural Owls are becoming darker towards the south, ie, towards warmer and more humid areas, as would be expected when considering 'Gloger's rule' (eg, Newton 2003). Melanism was so far confirmed only in *macroura* and not in other subspecies, so a mechanism of inheritance is in question. No in-depth genetic as well as morphological and ecological studies on melanism in *macroura* have been conducted yet but certain conclusions can be put forward on the basis of current knowledge. Since melanistic owls are blackish or dark brown, the increase of eumelanin is expected in a form of eumelanism (cf van Grouw 2006). Colour morphs are frequently genetically controlled by simple Mendelian genes and can serve as genetic markers in population studies (Gill 1995). However, melanism is not necessarily caused by gene mutation. Also environmental factors such as malnutrition, disease or

low exposure to sunlight can cause concentration of pigments (van Grouw 2006). In Ural Owl, it is not clear if melanism is genetically or environmentally determined but some observations are instructive. First, dark melanistic chicks occur in mixed broods with pale chicks. Second, the plumage coloration is extremely variable in *macroura*, with all intermediate stages occurring, but paler owls are much more common than dark ones. Third, in the reintroduction programme in the Bohemian Forest, Germany, a stock of mixed subspecies was used with birds originating from *liturata* and *macroura* but nevertheless after some generations also dark melanistic owls occurred in these broods (Scherzinger 2006). These examples suggest that melanism in Ural Owls is most probably genetically determined as a recessive character. Even in mixed broods between *liturata* and *macroura*, the recessive genes can express themselves after some generations. However, it is not clear how the cline of variation is determined in *macroura* and if colour morphs are really controlled by simple Mendelian genes, as suggested above. However, it was shown in some birds that eumelanism is a response to environmental heterogeneity which generates diversifying selection, where differently coloured individuals are adapted to different environmental conditions (Roulin et al 2008).

The phenomenon of regularly occurring melanism in the populations of *macroura* is still very poorly researched and this paper mostly presents an overview of current knowledge. Future studies should therefore focus on more detailed morphological characteristics of the colour variation in *macroura*, determine the mechanisms of inheritance and search for a possible ecological function of this melanism considering breeding success and survival rate of melanistic individuals.

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Samenvatting

MELANISME EN KLEEDVARIATIE BIJ ONDERSOORT *MACROURA* VAN OERALUIL Oeraluil *Strix uralensis* is een overwegend boreale broedvogel in Eurazië met tenminste drie zuidelijke broedpopulaties die als glaciale relictpopulaties kunnen worden beschouwd: in Japan (tenminste drie ondersoorten), China (*S u davidi*, tegenwoordig vaak als aparte soort beschouwd), en in Centraal- en Zuidoost-Europa (*S u macroura*). De kern van de verspreiding van *macroura* ligt in de Karpaten en Dinarische Alpen (Dinaridi). *Macroura* is de grootste van alle ondersoorten van Oeraluil met een langere staart en een donkerder verenkleed met meer contrastrijke tekening. *Macroura* is de enige ondersoort waarbinnen met regelmaat melanistische exemplaren voorkomen. Vier (of meer) kleurvormen kunnen worden onderscheiden, waarvan twee ('licht' en 'melanistisch') gemakkelijk te onderscheiden zijn. Melanistische exemplaren zijn erg donker met een bijna zwart masker en donker chocoladebruin verenkleed met een nauwelijks zichtbaar patroon van streping en lijken in het veld bijna egaal zwart. Er is een reeks van kleurvariaties en tenminste twee 'tussengroepen' kunnen als aparte kleurvormen worden benoemd, 'grijze' en 'partieel melanistische' exemplaren. De vier kleurvormen zijn weergegeven in figuur 2. Deze kleurvormen zijn zowel bij adulte vogels als bij (nest)jongen te onderscheiden. Hoewel melanistische en partieel melanistische exemplaren gevonden zijn binnen het gehele Karpatisch-Dinarische verspreidingsgebied toonde onderzoek aan museumbalgen aan dat donkere exemplaren vaker voorkomen in het zuidelijke deel van het verspreidingsgebied (tabel 2). Veldonderzoek bij populaties in de Dinarische Alpen in Kroatië en Slovenië gaf aan dat het aandeel donkere vogels (melanistisch en partieel melanistisch) hier 5-15% bedraagt (tabel 1). Melanisme bij Oeraluilen is nog niet diepgaand onderzocht maar waarschijnlijk betreft het een recessief genetisch kenmerk.

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Magenta Petrel photographed off Chatham Islands in November 2008

On 22 November 2008, a Magenta Petrel *Pterodroma magentae* was observed at sea near the edge of the Chatham Rise, New Zealand. On this date, we (a small birding group) were sailing on the *Spirit of Enderby* northwards from the deep water north of the Bounty Plateau and over the shallower waters of the Chatham Rise on our way to the Chatham Islands. The bird appeared shortly after breakfast at close range, first discovered by Steve Howell. A fortunate small group standing on the stern had excellent views at 30-40 m distance and I took some photographs – the best of this species made at sea so far. Following the announcement of the sighting, there was a mad rush to the stern by other birders on the boat but by the time they arrived the bird had disappeared. After a few minutes, much to everyone's relief, it reappeared off the stern at a distance of several 100 meters and all birders were able to get views of the bird. Our sighting proved to be the crown on an incredibly good seabirding day, which produced 32 species of tubenoses.

Magenta Petrel (or Taiko) was described from a single specimen collected 800 km east of the Chatham Islands, near the Tubai Islands in the South Pacific on 22 July 1867 during a voyage around the world of the Italian ship *Magenta* (Giglioli & Salvadori 1869). The link between this bird and the presumed-extinct Chatham Island 'Taiko' was revealed when a bird was caught on Chatham Island, New Zealand, by David Crockett on 1 January 1978 (Crockett 1994). Formerly widespread on Chatham Island, Magenta Petrel is now confined to one small forested valley system on the south-west of the main island. Not surprisingly, the species is listed as 'Critically Endangered' by BirdLife International, due to an assumed 80% decline in population in the last 60 years and the fact that it is restricted to one small location. The current population is estimated at 100-150 individuals and it is often referred to as the world's rarest seabird. In 2005, the 13 known breeding pairs successfully fledged 11 chicks. Molecular analysis discovered that 95% of the non-breeding adults were male. This suggests that the critically low population level may cause males difficulty in attracting a mate, as their calls are too spread out to attract the infrequent females which pass by (BirdLife International 2008). Conservationists are planning to increase the males' pulling power by creating a new breeding colony within a predator-proof fence. The first conservation programme was started in 2000 by the Department of Conservation, resulting in stopping the destruction of the breeding sites and strongly reducing the numbers of introduced predators (mainly rats and cats) near the nesting burrows.

189 Magenta Petrel / Magentastormvogel *Pterodroma magentae*, Chatham Rise, Pacific Ocean, 22 November 2008 *(Otto Plantema)*

Magenta Petrel has a brownish-grey back and wings, brown underwings and a white belly; it has a black bill and pink legs. Our sighting was only the fourth ever at sea; the first at-sea photographic record was published by Howell (2005). The sighting has to be considered by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand Rare Birds Committee.

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Yellow-billed Kite in High Atlas, Morocco, in April 2008

On 8 April 2008, the third day of a Limosa Holidays tour in southern Morocco, I was seated in front of a bus travelling from Marrakech to Ouarzazate across Tizi-n-Tichka, High Atlas. Apart from the driver, James Camden, Sue Cligg, Joe Nutley, Sue Nutley, Peter Salter, Mag Salter, Heather Sykes and Trevor Sykes accompanied me. After a morning's birding on the northern slopes, we had entered the high and barren habitat of the southern slopes. Here, I discovered a raptor high in the blue sky, distant but flying in our direction. As I could not figure out what species it was, I immediately asked the driver to stop. At first sight, it appeared very pale and, because initially its size could not be judged, all kinds of species flashed through my head. When we all had descended from the bus, the bird was already nearby and flew right over our heads. It turned out to have a slightly forked tail and its size and appearance matched a kite *Milvus* but not the kind we knew. It was already flying past us when I realized the importance of obtaining photographs, and succeeded to make a handful with my Nikon 600/5.6 manual focus lens. The bird was not as whitish all over as it seemed at a distance, having a pale orangey rufous body, undertail-coverts and underwing-coverts, with colours reminiscent of juvenile Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*. Even its proportions appeared aberrant for any Black Kite *M migrans* or Red Kite *M milvus*, as the wings appeared compact and the tail short. The tail fork was slight but real, ie, not caused by damage to the central rectrices. The photographs left us baffled and there was nothing in any of the bird books we were carrying that explained the bird's appearance. We noted it down as an aberrant Black Kite and decided to look at the photographs again when back home. Only then, after consulting others, it was identified as a Yellow-billed Kite *M aegyptius*.

The description is based upon brief impressions in the field and a series of photographs by ABvdB (see also Dutch Birding 30: 192, plate 217, 2008).

SIZE & STRUCTURE Compared with Black Kite wing shorter, more compact and more rounded, and tail shorter. Primaries showing five fingers. In left hand, possibly one inner primary damaged or missing. Tail slightly forked. Undertail-coverts long and covering most of tail. Leg short.
HEAD Pale orangey rufous with whitish chin.
UPPERPARTS Not seen.
UNDERPARTS Pale orangey rufous from throat down to undertail-coverts. No streaking visible.
WING Underwing showing sharply demarcated contrast between strikingly whitish remiges and pale orangey rufous coverts and body. Tip of five outer primaries blackish, not very sharply demarcated from pale base. Next two primaries with little and hardly visible black on outer tip. Remaining primaries without black. Secondaries whitish with inner secondaries towards body darker. Greater primary coverts whitish like remiges with some greyish smudges. Remaining underwing-coverts pale orangey rufous with no streaking visible. No dark band across wing or along trailing edge. No barring on remiges visible.
TAIL Whitish with rufous tinge and slightly darker corners. Barring not visible.
BARE PARTS Bill pale, possibly yellow, but difficult to ascertain on photographs due to reflection. Leg yellow.

The photographs were forwarded to several experienced birders. Nils van Duivendijk (in litt) was the first to respond and he concluded that the wing formula excluded all *Aquila* eagles, that the very short feet were one of various features pointing towards a *Milvus* kite, and that the obviously fingered p5 reminded him most of a Black Kite. He was the first to suggest that the rufous plumage with a large pale area in the remiges was reminiscent of Yellow-billed Kite, possibly a subadult. My companions and I had not considered that option because that taxon seemed out of limits and was not illustrated in any of our field guides (eg, Svensson et al 2000). Checking Ferguson-Lees & Christie (2005), however, it was obvious that figure 3b in plate 7 offered the clue to the bird's identification. Our bird showed the same proportions of wing and tail, with rounded wing and short tail and shallow tail fork. Furthermore, as in adult Yellow-billed, the underside of the wing lacked any sign of a dark band over the greater coverts while the largely whitish secondaries together with the whitish base of the primaries formed a broad whitish surround of the pale orangey rufous underwing-coverts. In Black and Red Kite, which are longer winged and longer tailed, there is more contrast between the pale base of the primaries and the darkish secondaries. The pale orangey rufous colour of the underwing-coverts, body and tail was also similar to Yellow-billed, and quite different from any Black and Red Kite. The all-pale bill was not noticed in the field and difficult to judge from the photographs because of an apparent bright sunlight reflection. In Yellow-billed, the bill is black in juveniles and yellow in adults except for adults of the eastern nominate *M a aegyptius*, occurring in Egypt and the Red Sea region south to Kenya, in which the

190-191 Yellow-billed Kite / Geelsnavelwouw *Milvus aegyptius*, Tizi-n-Tichka, High Atlas, Morocco, 8 April 2008 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)*

bill is sometimes blackish (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2005). The possibility of a hybrid Black x Red could be ruled out because, for instance, the bird's features like tail length and underwing pattern, were not intermediate. Dick Forsman (in litt) responded that, judging from the photographs, the bird looked like an eastern African nominate rather than a *M a parasitus* from central and western Africa. Like our bird, Egyptian birds are redder and more uniformly coloured than western African ones, which are nearer to European Black Kite *M m migrans* in colour.

This Yellow-billed Kite was accepted by the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee as the first for Morocco (http://go-south.ifrance.com/). A previous report concerning 'one bird with yellow bill' near Tinerhir on 5 April 1978 had not been accepted (cf Thévenot et al 2003). It was also the first for north-western Africa (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann et al 2005). There are no other records of this African species in the Western Palearctic outside Egypt (cf Dickinson 2003). The Moroccan Rare Birds Committee decided not to make a definite decision about the subspecies involved (Jacques Franchimont in litt). Based on the Moroccan bird's appearance, however, it was most likely the nominate despite the fact that *parasitus* seems to be a more likely vagrant when taking into account distance and migration pattern. The breeding areas of *parasitus* nearest to the High Atlas are 1600 km to the south in southern Mali and extreme southern Mauritania. This taxon occurs widely in tropical Africa and shows strong seasonal movements. Generally, the northern populations migrate south in October at the end of rains and migrate north again in March-April to summer north of 12°N (Brown et al 1982, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2005). The breeding areas of the nominate nearest to Morocco are no less than 3300 km to the east in Egypt's Nile valley at more than twice the distance of *parasitus*. It breeds in early spring in Egypt and migrates south to coastal regions of Kenya and Tanzania but the extent of its migration is not well known (Brown et al 1982).

I would like to thank Andrea Corso, Nils van Duivendijk, Dick Forsman and Dick Groenendijk for their assistance in identifying this bird.

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Territorial Bridled Terns off Mediterranean coast of Israel in summer 2008

During a survey of the Achziv islands nature reserve, Western Galilee, Israel, on 7 July 2008, Eyal Miller and Talya Oron (both Israel Nature & Parks Authority) found two adult Bridled Terns *Onychoprion anaethetus* on Nachlieli. This small (c 100 x 50 m) rocky islet (with a sandy interior) is situated c 800 m off the Mediterranean shore, just south of the border with Lebanon. They were easily identified by the combination of size, dark greyish brown upperparts, narrow white forehead patch and greyish neck (excluding the only confusion species, Sooty Tern *O fuscata*, which shows even darker blackish upperparts, a blackish neck and more white on the forehead, and which is larger; plate 192-193). The birds were involved in courtship behaviour amongst several pairs of Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* and c 30 pairs of Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. The male offered the crouched female a small fish while holding his wings down (with carpal joints held away from the body) and stretching his head forward, with bill pointed downwards (plate 192). This behaviour is considered typical at a nesting territory (Cramp & Simmons 1983). During a subsequent visit to the islet on 13 July, EM and TO again observed courtship, as well as territorial behaviour (by the male) directed towards Common Terns. Also, behaviour indicative of copulation was noted when, after both birds 'disappeared' behind a small rock, one was intensively preening, typical of birds after copulation.

Then on 3 August (from 09:00 until 09:45), Gert Ottens observed the two Bridled Terns from the nearest beach at Betzet. At first, one bird was seen flying around the islet, soon followed by the other. After a few minutes, both birds flew off quickly, chasing each other in ever widening (and up to several 100 m high) circles away from the islet. After c 2 min they returned, chasing each other very closely and at high speed, then one bird settled out of view and the other flew off over the sea to forage. This aerial display is known as 'high flight' and is performed by breeding pairs during the start of the breeding season and again after the egg has hatched (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

On both 7 and 13 August, again from Betzet beach, the birds were observed by GO (from 06:15 until 09:45). On 7 August, both birds were present and occasionally one would fly around the islet before settling down out of view. On two occasions, one was seen to leave the islet in a southerly direction. The first time, it returned after 15 min with (what seemed to be) a small fish. The second time, it had not returned by the time GO left. The events noted for 13 August were somewhat different. After c 2.5 h without any sightings, one bird appeared from the south and settled down out of view. Then again, one would fly around the island every now and then and settle. On one occasion, the birds performed the 'high flight'. On 20 August, GO joined EM (and dolphin researcher Mia Elasar) on a survey of Achziv islands nature reserve and the surrounding sea area. Nachlieli was not visited during this survey, in order not to disturb the breeding birds, so the islet

192 Bridled Terns / Brilsterns *Onychoprion anaethetus,* adults in courtship, Nachlieli, western Galilee, Israel, 7 July 2008 *(Eyal Miller)*

193 Bridled Tern / Brilstern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, adult, Nachlieli, western Galilee, Israel, 20 August 2008 *(Mia Elasar)*

was watched from a boat, from c 06:30 to 07:00. One Bridled Tern was present during this time. It flew around the boat several times while uttering a few alarm calls and kept returning to the same rock (plate 193). One or (probably) both were still present on 22 August (Oz Horine, via IsraBirdnet). However, during a survey on 4 September, EM did not encounter any on or around Nachlieli. Finally, a check of the islet itself on 10 September produced no trace of the terns' presence there (TO in litt).

Distribution

Bridled Tern is a species of mainly (sub)tropical seas of the Pacific coast of Central America, the Caribbean, West Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Philippines and Indonesia to Australia (del Hoyo et al 1996). In a Western Palearctic (WP) – as well as probably global – context, the most important breeding grounds are found in the Persian Gulf, with smaller populations in the Red Sea and at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Thévenot et al 2003). Its movements are not well understood but vagrants have been recorded in most western and northern European countries bordering either the Atlantic Ocean or the North Sea, mainly in summer (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Mitchell & Young 1997).

Vagrant Bridled Terns have been noted to behave somewhat territorially in the WP at least once before. During July-August 1989, two adults were present at different coastal localities in Belgium and the Netherlands. On a few occasions, these birds were seen together, and on 5 and 6 July they performed the 'high flight' in a mixed colony of Common Terns and Arctic Terns *S paradisaea* at Terneuzen, Zeeland, the Netherlands (Schekkerman & Meininger 1990).

Status in Israel and Mediterranean

In Israel, Bridled Tern is a regular but scarce non-breeding summer visitor to Eilat, at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba (Shirihai 1996). Up to 20 birds are reported regularly, especially during late July-August. The largest flock, of 35-40 birds, was recorded on 1 August 2006 (Noam Weiss, via IsraBirdnet), with another notable flock of 36 on 26 July 2003 (Daniel Gelbart, via IsraBirdnet). Apparently, mainly first-summer birds are involved (Shirihai 1996). Most likely these are non-breeders from the nearest breeding populations in the Red Sea. For the Mediterranean coast of Israel, Shirihai (1996) does not list any records. During 2003-08, however, there have been seven records of single adults along the northern coast, from Dor (near Hadera, Hof HaCarmel) northward, with most in the summer, especially in August (see below).

Elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Bridled Tern is extremely rare with one record of an adult at Tsoukalio lagoon, Amvrakikos, Greece, on 6 June 1987 (Handrinos & Akriotis 1997). In Spain, one at Guadalhorce river mouth, Málaga, on 15 September 2005 is currently under consideration by the Spanish rarities committee, while another photographed at Ebro delta, Taragona, on 18 June 2008 has not yet been submitted (Ricard Gutiérrez in litt). A report at Hammamet, Nabeul, Tunisia, on 16 April 2005 has not yet been accepted (Kieran Fahy in litt). There are currently no records from other parts of the Mediterranean (cf Isenmann & Moali 2000, Isenmann et al 2005, Thévenot et al 2003, Sherif Baha el Din in litt, Andrea Corso in litt, Philippe Dubois in litt, Guy Kirwan in litt, Peter Meininger in litt).

Discussion

On the regular breeding grounds, the main breeding season of Bridled Terns is June-July (Cramp & Simmons 1983). It is possible that the birds on Nachlieli were already present before 7 July. But even if this was not the case, then the fact that they remained on Nachlieli for over six weeks means that they were at least behaving territorially, even though no definite proof of nesting was obtained.

It is possible that most of the records along Israel's Mediterranean coast relate to the same individual that happened to attract a mate in 2008. For example, three records at Ma'agan Michael (where similar, but smaller, rocky islands are found off the coast) in consecutive years (19 August-6 September 2003, 21-22 August 2004 and 22-24 June 2005) suggest that one was already prospecting suitable nesting sites. Records from 2007 and 2008 are from more northerly sites, and it is interesting that the only winter record for Israel, at Betzet beach (across Nachlieli), was on 30 January 2008. In all, it seems not unlikely that one or two birds were already in the breeding area for a while but, for lack of definite proof (the birds could not be recognized individually) this remains conjecture.

Since Bridled Terns usually retain their nest sites from year to year (Dunlop & Jenkins 1992), the birds might show up again in the area in following years. However, by 14 May 2009 the birds had not (yet) returned, nor were there any reports from the general area until then (IsraBirdnet & GO pers obs).

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Aberrant Savi's Warbler trapped at Elburg, the Netherlands, in June 2008

On 21 June 2008, Bennie van den Brink and Symen Deuzeman were trapping birds at the ringing site 'Korte Waarden' near Elburg, Gelderland, the Netherlands. At c 09:00, BB found a peculiar bird in a mistnet and showed it to SD. Their first impression was a Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, which is regularly trapped at this site, but soon they doubted this identification because the bird showed some characteristics that also fitted Common Grasshopper Warbler *L naevia*, such as darkish centres of median and lesser coverts and dark shaft-streaks of the undertail-coverts. Some relevant measurements were taken and the bird was photographed. The photographs and measurements were sent to André van Loon and Kees (CS) Roselaar for their opinion. In table 1, some measurements of the bird are presented. It had a swollen cloaca, indicating a sexually active male.

Based on the photographs, showing the darkish centres of the wing-coverts and dark shaft-streaks of the undertail-coverts, and the relatively large size, AvL considered the possibility of a hybrid or at least a Savi's Warbler showing some influence of Common Grasshopper Warbler. CSR compared the Elburg *Locustella* with 12 Savi's in the collection of the Zoological Museum at Amsterdam, Noord-Holland (ZMA). The bird from Elburg differed from these as follows (Kees Roselaar in litt): ***1*** dark centres of median and lesser coverts, fitting Common Grasshopper, not Savi's; ***2*** dark shafts of undertail-coverts instead of white, fitting Common Grasshopper, not Savi's; ***3*** p9 seems to be 0-1 mm shorter than p8 (see plate 196 – detail undertail-coverts – in which p9 of the right wing is best visible), fitting Common Grasshopper better than Savi's, in which p9 is 1-2 mm longer than p8 (in fact, Savi's and River Warbler *L fluviatilis* are the only European passerines in which p9 is the longest of all primaries); and ***4*** the colour of the bird is rather olive-tinged, not deep brown as in Savi's.

The plumage and structural characters mentioned above better fit Common Grasshopper Warbler. On the other hand, the measurements strongly support Savi's Warbler. Both wing-length and tail-length are too long for Common Grasshopper (table 1). The absence of a notch on p9 and the only very slight emargination on p8 better fit Savi's. Also the broad-pointed tail-feathers and the long undertail-coverts with white tips are characteristic for Savi's (Kees Roselaar in litt).

Based on the 'mixed characters', the Elburg *Locustella* could be assumed to be a hybrid Savi's x Common Grasshopper Warbler. However, no such hybrids have been described (cf McCarthy 2006) and their existence and features can only be guessed at. It is also possible that Savi's Warbler is more variable than previously known. Even if the bird was a hybrid, the Common Grasshopper characteristics appear too weak to indicate a first-generation (F1) hybrid (both parents representing two different species). Possibly, one of the grand-

194 Aberrant Savi's Warbler / afwijkende Snor *Locustella luscinioides*, Korte Waarden, Elburg, Gelderland, Netherlands, 21 June 2008 *(Symen Deuzeman)* **195** Aberrant Savi's Warbler / afwijkende Snor *Locustella luscinioides*, Korte Waarden, Elburg, Gelderland, Netherlands, 21 June 2008 *(Symen Deuzeman)*. Note dark centres of median and lesser coverts and very weak emargination of outer web of p8.

196 Aberrant Savi's Warbler / Snor *Locustella luscinioides*, Korte Waarden, Elburg, Gelderland, Netherlands, 21 June 2008 *(Symen Deuzeman)*. Note dark instead of white shaft of undertail-coverts. **197** Savi's Warbler / Snor *Locustella luscinioides*, Zwarte Meer West, Overijssel, Netherlands, 29 June 2008 *(Symen Deuzeman)*. Note white shaft of undertail-coverts. **198** Savi's Warbler / Snor *Locustella luscinioides*, Castricum, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 27 August 2007 *(André J van Loon)*. Note unmarked median and lesser coverts.

TABLE 1 Measurements (in mm) and some other features of aberrant *Locustella* warbler ringed at Elburg, Gelderland, Netherlands, on 21 June 2008, compared with measurements of Savi's Warbler *L luscinioides* and Common Grasshopper Warbler *L naevia* (combined data from Cramp 1992 and Svensson 1992)

	Elburg *Locustella*	Savi's Warbler	Common Grasshopper Warbler
Wing length	72	63-79	61-68
Tail length	64	50-62	46-59
Tarsus length	21.6	20.4-22.7	19.2-21.6
Bill depth (at nostril)	3.32		
Bill length (to feathering)	11.3		
Bill length (to skull)	14.45	14.8-17.1	13.0-15.5
Head+bill length	32.02		
Length longest undertail-covert (measured from tail base)	49.5		
Fat score (Busse)	0		
Weight (g)	13.5		
Leg colour	pale horn		
Toe colour	pink		

Length of primaries and first secondary (primaries numbered from inner to outer; p10 not measured; NB: length of each primary measured separately with thin ruler, therefore not wing formula in proper sense, in which distance from primary tips to wing-tip is measured)

S1	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
43	45	47	47	48	49	52	53	55,5	55,5

Emarginations	none, or only very slightly on p8 only
Notches	none

parents was a Common Grasshopper. But, for now, we prefer to assume that the bird was an aberrant Savi's.

We thank André van Loon and Kees Roselaar for their help with the identification of this strange bird. We also thank Andrea van den Berg for her help in translating the note into English.

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Brieven

Tristan Albatross collected in Sicily, Italy, in October 1957

Soldaat et al (2009) gave an overview of WP occurrences of *Diomedea* albatrosses. One of these records involves an immature male Tristan Albatross *D exulans dabbenena* (a taxon not recognized by Dickinson (2003) who includes it in nominate *D e exulans*) collected at Termini Imerese, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, on 4 October 1957 (Orlando 1958). Soldaat et al (2009) presented an account on how this beached bird was killed. Because of my interest in the occurrence of vagrant birds in the Western Palearctic, I contacted several people in Italy to look into this record in more detail. Bruno Massa brought me in contact with Fabio Lo Valvo who works at Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily, where the specimen is stored. FLV kindly photographed the specimen for identification and documentation purposes. From the photograph, one can clearly identify the bird as a 'wandering albatross' (*D e exulans*, *D e dabbenena*, *D e amsterdamensis*, *D e antipodensis*, *D e gibsoni*). The combination of a huge pink bill without black line along the cutting edge, white head and underparts, white upperparts with black vermiculations and black wings excludes the 'royal albatrosses' (*D epomophora sanfordi* and *D e epomophora*) which look similar but have, for example, a thin black line along the cutting edge of the bill (cf Onley & Scofield 2007).

Soldaat et al (2009) mentioned the bill size (length 150 mm, width c 39 mm) published in Orlando (1958) as being characteristic for *dabbenena*. Apart from this, the overall smaller size separates it from Wandering Albatross *D e exulans* but does not exclude Antipodean Albatross *D e antipodensis* which is similar in size. However, *antipodensis* is extremely unlikely to occur in the WP because it is distributed mainly in the Pacific Ocean. Separating the 'wandering albatross' taxa, which are often regarded as five separate species (cf Burg & Croxall 2004, Soldaat et al 2009), is very difficult but measurements should lead to the correct taxon. The Sicilian specimen is thus assumed to be *dabbenena*, based on bill measurements. It represents the only record of this taxon in the WP and, to date, the only well-documented record of a *Diomedea* albatross of presumably wild origin in the WP (cf Soldaat et al 2009).

199 Tristan Albatross / Tristanalbatros *Diomedea exulans dabbenena*, immature male (collected at Palermo, Sicily, Italy, on 4 October 1957), Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily, Italy, February 2008 *(Fabio Lo Valvo)*

I thank Giancarlo Fracasso and Bruno Massa for their help in tracing the Sicily specimen and Fabio Lo Valvo for taking the photographs.

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Masters of Mystery

Looking back: 12 years Masters of Mystery

With the solution of Sykes's Warbler *Acrocephalus rama* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in the first issue of the current volume (Dutch Birding 31: 44-46, 2009), the Masters of Mystery competition has come to an end. This overview looks back on 12 years Masters of Mystery and lists some interesting facts and results.

Start of a new competition

In 1997, Nils van Duivendijk and Diederik Kok initiated 'Masters of Mystery' as a new bird identification competition in Dutch Birding. The series was supported by the editors as a welcome follow-up to the once regular mystery photographs in Dutch Birding, which had become rather irregular, needing new stimulus. From the start in Dutch Birding 19: 80-82, 1997, the high standard of this new competition was immediately set. During that first year, it consisted of three rounds with four mystery photographs each (with the solutions in the next issue) but from 1998 onwards, two mystery photographs per round were presented, each time combined with the solutions of the previous two photographs. This formula was maintained until the end of the competition, which summons to a total of 144 mystery birds of which the identification has been discussed. Starting in 1997, Swarovski Benelux generously sponsored the competition, awarding some of their highly acclaimed optic products to the overall winner of each year. In addition, smaller prizes (mostly books) were available for each round, kindly donated by several sponsors. DK and NvD carefully edited the Masters of Mystery for five years until 2001. From 2002, their task was taken over by Rob van Bemmelen and Dick Groenendijk until early 2009, with assistance by Jan Eerbeek during the last two years.

Entrants

Every first and second round of a new Masters of Mystery year, more than 100 entrants entered their solutions. Despite the prizes for each round, people dropped off one after another as the competition continued, and in the final round, only a few 10s of entrants were still in the race for Swarovski's first prize. Table 1 shows the Gallery of Fame with the overall winners of each year. Hans Larsson (Sweden) in 2005 and 2008 and Harri Kontkanen (Finland) in 1999 and 2007 both managed to win the competition twice. The latter, however, was very unfortunate, having joint winners in both years and losing both times in the draw for the Swarovski optics. In the 12-year history of the Masters of Mystery, mostly German but also several Dutch, Finnish and Swedish birders were among the winners. Remarkably, there has never been a winner from Belgium, although Belgian birders are famous for defeating their Dutch colleagues in mystery bird competitions held at, eg, the annual Dutch Birding day!

Selection of photographs

For each issue, the selection of the mystery photographs was a very delicate and challenging job as the margin between 'too easily identified' and 'impossible to identify safely' proved narrow. An additional important requirement was that the subject should be interesting for many readers (and authors!). Preferably, the species involved had not yet been discussed in an earlier round. Furthermore, the availability of high quality solution photographs sometimes also played a limiting role.

A total of 44 photographers supplied their work for publication in the Masters of Mystery. Of 28 of them, only one or two mystery photographs were used, illustrating that the number of regular 'mystery bird photographers' was rather low during the 12 years. The most regular suppliers were Arnoud van den Berg with 26 photographs, NvD with 14, DK with 10 and Leo Boon and Edwin Winkel, both with eight. Of the 144 mystery photographs, 67% concerned birds resting, perching or foraging; c 10% of the mystery birds were swimming or diving and 13% of the photographs showed birds in flight. Another 13% concerned hand-held birds. The latter category turned out to be the most difficult to solve.

Selected birds and results

From all families occurring in the Western Palearctic, some have starred far more often as mystery bird than others. The most treated family are the warblers Sylviidae with 26 mystery photographs (18% of the total of 144). The waders (comprising members of the pratincoles Glareolidae, plovers Charadriidae and sandpipers Scolopacidae) is represented with 24 photographs (17%).

200 Willow Warblers / Fitissen *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Valassaaret, Finland, September 1995 *(Jari Peltomäki)*. Both birds were used as mystery bird in the Masters of Mystery competition. The left one was the most difficult mystery bird in 12 years of competition: no entrant identified it correctly.

Raptors (hawks Accipitridae and falcons Falconidae) were chosen 16 times (11%) and gulls Laridae 11 times (8%). Of these most 'popular' families, the mystery photographs of gulls resulted in the lowest percentage of correct answers (on average correctly identified by only 39% of the entrants), whereas the waders were the most easy ones (on average, 54% correct answers). Of the families with more than five mystery photographs, wagtails Motacillidae (including pipits *Anthus*) were the most difficult to identify. On average, only 30% of the entrants managed to identify the mystery photographs of the latter family correctly.

During the 12 years, on average, each mystery photograph was correctly identified by 45% of the entrants. Some of the photographs appeared extremely difficult and one may argue whether a mystery bird which was solved by only one or two or even by none of the entrants could be regarded as a suitable one. The most difficult mystery bird was a hand-held Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (23: 211-215, 2001; repeated her as plate 200), which none of the entrants identified correctly. Another nearly impossible mystery bird turned out to be the preening Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (26: 53-56, 2004), which was identified correctly by just one contender. On the other hand, both a snorkeling Goosander *Mergus merganser* (26: 126-127, 2004) and a feeding Wood Warbler *P sibilatrix* (27: 269-271, 2005) were identified correctly by 90% of the entrants, being the highest scoring of all 144 photographs.

Keen birding

Regularly, the solution texts of the Masters of Mystery contained new identification knowledge that had been published only shortly before in leading birding journals but not yet in field guides. An example is the well illustrated and extensive discussion of a mystery photograph showing a Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* (21: 275-283, 1999). Other examples are Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* (22: 32-39, 2000), Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *A pallidus* (24: 223-228, 2002) and Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* (29: 35-40, 2007). Worth mentioning is also the Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* featured in the very first round (19: 125-130, 1997), a species with just two WP records at the time which, until then, had received little attention in the European birding literature (the British records in

201-203 Lesser Whitethroat / Braamsluiper *Sylvia curruca*, Lesvos, Greece, May 1995 *(Peter de Knijff)*. Used as mystery bird and presumed to be an 'orphean warbler *S hortensis/crassirostris*' (then: Orphean Warbler *S hortensis*) by the authors (Dutch Birding 19: 244-248, 1997), but in retrospect a Lesser Whitethroat, as most of the entrants rightly suggested.

recent years have changed this dramatically...). Furthermore, rarely illustrated plumages also received attention. In most cases, these concerned well known European species such as a second-winter Common Gull *L canus canus* (20: 36-43, 1998) and a juvenile Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (28: 33-37, 2006). Both proved to be difficult to identify (with 19% and 21% correct identifications, respectively), which may be attributed to the lack of illustrations of these plumages in field guides. It can be concluded that a broad knowledge of bird identification was needed to solve the mystery photographs and it is, therefore, not a surprise that some of the keenest European birders are listed in the Gallery of Fame (table 1).

One of the mystery photographs deserves extra attention. It showed a *Sylvia* warbler photographed on Lesvos, Greece, in May 1995 (19: 192, 1997). In the attempts to find difficult mystery photographs, the authors came across this photograph which initially was thought to show a first-summer female 'Orphean Warbler *S hortensis*' (which, nowadays, should be called Eastern Orphean Warbler *S crassirostris*). In the mystery photograph, the bird's bill structure was difficult to judge. However, it seemed rather broad based although not stout overall. There was a quite well marked white half eye-ring but the flank and undertail-coverts could not be seen so the bird appeared very similar to a Lesser Whitethroat *S curruca*. Obviously, this was one of the kind of photographs the authors were looking for! None of the entrants opted for 'Orphean Warbler' and 87% chose Lesser Whitethroat as solution. Actually they were right, although the solution text (19: 244-248, 1997) still went for 'Orphean Warbler'. In the photograph published with the solution, the undertail-coverts, although partially hidden, seemed to be white and unmarked, the half eye-ring stood out and the bill looked also quite normal for Lesser Whitethroat. This is, as far as we know, the only identification mistake in this competition and it is more than appropriate, albeit belatedly, to correct it here. Fortunately, this error had no influence on the outcome of the competition.

TABLE 1 Gallery of fame: winners of the Masters of Mystery competition in 1997-2008

Year	Name
1997	Dave McAdams (Germany); Leon Edelaar (Netherlands)*
1998	Hannu Jännes (Finland)
1999	Sander Bot (Netherlands)*; Marc Guyt (Netherlands); Harri Kontkanen (Finland)
2000	Hein Prinsen (Netherlands)
2001	Sebastiaan Klein (Denmark); Clemens Portofée* (Germany)
2002	Martin Gottschling (Germany)
2003	Axel Halley (Germany)
2004	Felix Heintzenberg (Sweden)
2005	Hans Larsson (Sweden)
2006	Tommy Holmgren (Sweden)
2007	Harri Kontkanen (Finland); Fabian Bindrich* (Germany); Andrew Holden (England); Martin Kühn (Germany)
2008	Hans Larsson (Sweden)

* Winner of Swarovski optics after draw

Finally

It would have been impossible to produce 12 years of Masters of Mystery without the help of a strong editorial board. Therefore, our thanks go out to Arnoud van den Berg, Enno Ebels and André van Loon for their often last-minute comments on style, grammar and content. For us, it has been a most rewarding learning experience, well worth the effort. We hope that we have succeeded in our aim to present readers an interesting and challenging competition. Now, let's go into the field, find those mystery birds and identify them!

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Corrigenda

In het bijschrift bij plaat 46 (Dutch Birding 31: 62, 2009) werd niet de juiste fotograaf vermeld. De foto werd gemaakt door Hans Pohlmann. REDACTIE

In the caption of plate 46 (Dutch Birding 31: 62, 2009) the wrong photographer was mentioned. The photograph was taken by Hans Pohlmann. EDITORS

CDNA-mededelingen

Recente CDNA-besluiten Op de wintervergadering van 14 maart 2009 heeft de Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna (CDNA) onder meer criteria opgesteld voor de beoordeling en mogelijke aanvaarding van vondsten van dode vogels. Vanwege de soms onduidelijke herkomst (zoals bijvoorbeeld bij aangespoelde zeevogels) was hier behoefte aan. Deze criteria worden opgenomen in het Handboek CDNA (www.dutchbirding.nl/content/cdna/handboek.pdf). Voorts is gebleken dat de meeste waarnemers die door een CDNA-regiocoördinator worden benaderd wanneer een waarneming onvolledig of niet wordt ingediend positief reageren; daarom wordt deze (nieuwe) werkwijze voortgezet. Nils van Duivendijk en Teus Luijendijk hebben per 1 januari 2009 de CDNA verlaten en zijn opgevolgd door Rob van Bemmelen en Roy Slaterus. Het onderhouden van contacten met buitenlandse experts wordt overgenomen door RvB en tevens gaat hij het Handboek CDNA beheren. Het 'bewaken' van roulerende pakketten wordt overgenomen door RS.

De Britse dwaalgastencommissie (BBRC) heeft laten weten dat de Grote Tafeleend *Aythya valisineria* van Castricum, Noord-Holland, vanaf januari 2003 naar hun mening niet dezelfde is als het eerste (of tweede) Britse geval, omdat ze er vrijwel zeker van zijn dat 'hun' vogel geen wing-tag had en doordat de vogel er anders uitzag. Het gevolg is dat de BBRC niet meer specifiek op zoek gaat naar informatie omtrent het gebruik van wingtags. Daarom is afgesproken dat de al eerder aangekondigde herroulatie van de Nederlandse Grote Tafeleend kan aanvangen.

De waarneming van de Bulwer's Stormvogel *Bulweria bulwerii* bij de Westplaat, Zuid-Holland, in augustus 1995 gaat (wederom) in herroulatie naar aanleiding van informatie uit een te publiceren artikel in British Birds en van commentaren van enkele buitenlandse zeevogelkenners op deze waarneming. Het geval heeft een eerdere herroulatie 'overleefd' maar het blijft op basis van nieuwe kennis en inzichten tot discussie leiden en dat vormt de aanleiding om het geval opnieuw te beoordelen.

Omdat er in 2008 geen nieuwe taxa voor Nederland zijn vastgesteld en omdat de dossiers met betrekking tot nieuwe taxa uit 2007 en eerdere jaren al waren afgehandeld, heeft de CDNA geen beslissingen hoeven nemen over de toelating van nieuwe taxa tot de Nederlandse lijst. (De Spaanse Keizerarend *Aquila adalberti* van 6 mei 2007 in Noord-Brabant (Dutch Birding 30: 374, 2008) is inmiddels aanvaard maar dient nog als nieuwe soort bekrachtigd te worden op de zomervergadering.)

Op de vergadering was André van Loon als 'intermediair' tussen Vogeltrekstation cq ringers en CDNA aanwezig om de afspraken over het opvragen van informatie bij ringers nog eens door te nemen. Afgesproken is dat bekende maar nog niet ingediende ringgevallen gewoon kunnen rouleren. Mocht tijdens de roulatie blijken dat er voor de beoordeling informatie van de ringer nodig is dan zal AvL deze opvragen. Willem van Rijswijk zal, als secretaris, AvL berichten wanneer informatie over een ringvangst aan het CDNA-archief moet worden toegevoegd. Het blijft uiteraard zeer wenselijk dat ringers hun vangsten van beoordeel(onder)soorten zo veel mogelijk zelf blijven indienen.

Tijdens de vergadering is verder uitvoerig gesproken over de zogeheten 'escape-problematiek' (hoe om te gaan met soorten waarvan zowel een wilde herkomst als een herkomst uit gevangenschap aannemelijk is) en de status van een aantal soorten op de Nederlandse lijst. Met betrekking tot dit onderwerp zijn echter (nog) geen afspraken gemaakt en de bestaande richtlijnen blijven onverkort van kracht. DICK GROENENDIJK & WILLEM VAN RIJSWIJK

Redactiemededelingen

Beperking van onkostenvergoeding voor auteurs en fotografen De redactie van Dutch Birding heeft in overleg met het DBA-bestuur besloten om de onkostenvergoeding voor auteurs en fotografen drastisch in te perken. Deze regeling is c 20 jaar geleden ingevoerd om het aanbod van hoogwaardige artikelen en foto's te waarborgen en (enige) concurrentie te kunnen bieden aan commerciële (vogel)tijdschriften uit binnen- en vooral buitenland. De nieuwe beleidslijn houdt in dat er in principe geen vergoedingen meer worden betaald voor foto's en artikelen of mededelingen. Behalve voor een aantal artikelen dat enige tijd geleden is ingediend kunnen er ook uitzonderingen gelden voor 'artwork' (schetsen of verftekeningen), bepaalde exclusieve foto's en voor bijzondere artikelen, met name over determinatie of taxonomie, wanneer het schrijven veel werk en onkosten met zich meebrengt. Voor onderzoekskosten kan men een aanvraag indienen bij het Dutch Birding-fonds. Redactie en bestuur hopen hiermee voldoende financiële mogelijkheden te bieden om het niveau van artikelen en fotomateriaal in omvang en kwaliteit op peil te houden.

Deze nieuwe bezuinigingen zijn een gevolg van stijgende kosten en teruglopende inkomsten, onder meer door de lichte maar gestage daling van het aantal abonnees. Het sterk beperken van de vergoedingen heeft naar verwachting geen directe invloed op de kwaliteit en inhoud van het tijdschrift en maakt het mogelijk dat de abonnementskosten niet stijgen. Een andere overweging voor de beperking van vergoedingen is het feit dat kosten voor auteurs en fotografen zijn verminderd door de sterke vlucht van de digitalisering. Door de nieuwe

digitale mogelijkheden is bijvoorbeeld ook het aanbod van kwalitatief goed fotomateriaal dramatisch gestegen. Een bijkomend voordeel is dat de administratieve taken voor de redactiepenningmeester (sinds jaar en dag Ferdy Hieselaar) sterk worden teruggebracht.

De nieuwe regeling gaat in bij het volgende nummer (Dutch Birding 31-4). De effecten zullen worden geëvalueerd zodat er kan worden bijgestuurd wanneer blijkt dat er onverwacht nadelige gevolgen ontstaan. REDACTIE

Reduction of payment rates for authors and photographers The editors of Dutch Birding and the board of the Dutch Birding Association have decided to drastically reduce the payment rates for authors and photographers. Starting with the following issue (Dutch Birding 31-4), no payments will be given for regular papers or photographs. Apart from a number of papers submitted in the past, exceptions can also be made for artwork, exclusive high-quality photographs and certain papers (eg, on identification or taxonomy) for which considerable costs are made. For special occasions, authors can apply for the Dutch Birding fund, eg, when travel and research costs have to be made. This reduction of payment rates is necessary because of rising production costs and a slight decrease in the number of subscribers, while any increase of subscription rates has to be kept to a minimum. In addition, it is thought that the actual costs for authors and, especially, photographers have decreased in recent years as result of the digital revolution. It is expected that this new policy will not have an impact on the quality of the journal's content but, if there are unexpected negative consequences, the policy may be adjusted. EDITORS

Namen van digitale fotobestanden Hoewel de redactie haar uiterste best doet om fouten te voorkomen, komt het helaas nog steeds wel eens voor dat in bijschriften van foto's in Dutch Birding niet de juiste fotograaf wordt vermeld. Een van de oorzaken van dergelijke vergissingen is gelegen in het feit dat de fotoredactie van één vogel vaak van vele verschillende fotografen beeldmateriaal ontvangt. Bovendien hebben deze bestanden soms onduidelijke namen of betreffen bestandsnamen die door de camera worden gegenereerd.

Fotografen kunnen helpen om het aantal vergissingen nog verder terug te dringen door hun eigen naam (alsmede de volledige datum van de foto!) in de naam van het aan Dutch Birding aangeboden digitale fotobestand op te nemen. Het vermelden van de vogelsoort in de bestandsnaam is minder noodzakelijk. Deze spreekt doorgaans voor zich en bovendien kan deze genoemd worden in het e-mailbericht waarmee de foto's worden opgestuurd. REDACTIE

Names of digital image files Although the editors are trying their best to avoid mistakes, it sometimes still happens that the wrong photographer is mentioned in captions of photographs in Dutch Birding. A source of errors is the fact that the photographic editor often receives several images of the same bird from different photographers. Quite often the file names are unclear or are simply the file names created by the camera.

Photographers can help decrease the number of errors by using their own name in the file names (as well as the full date!) of the images that are sent to Dutch Birding. Putting in the species name is less necessary; this is usually obvious and can also be mentioned in the e-mail message by which the images are sent. EDITORS

WP reports

This review lists rare and interesting birds reported in the Western Palearctic mainly from **late March–mid-May 2009**. The reports are largely unchecked and their publication here does not imply future acceptance by a rarities committee. Observers are requested to submit their records to each country's rarities committee. Corrections are welcome and will be published.

GEESE TO DUCKS This winter, a flock of 410 **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* was found in Iraq (www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/04/nature_iraq_surveys.html). An unringed blue-morph **Ross's Goose** *A rossii* on Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, on 9 May was remarkable not only because, for the last few winters, the once regular two or three white-morphs have no longer been encountered in the Netherlands but also because the blue morph is extremely rare (maybe one in 10 000) even in North America. A male **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* at Loch of Brow, Shetland, Scotland, on 16-25 April and again from 3 May is considered a suitable candidate for acceptance as a genuine vagrant. The annual spring build-up reported for the past four years of **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* at the Manych wetland, Stavropol region, Russia, was on its way on 27 March when a record 3430 were counted (normally, the peak is in mid-April). In Iceland, long-staying male (present since 1998) and female **Steller's Eiders** *Polysticta stelleri* at Borgarfjörður eystri and Blikalón, Melrakkaslétta, respectively, were still present on 18 April. An adult male **American Scoter** *Melanitta americana* was photographed on Læsø, Nordjylland, Denmark, between 11 and 16 April (it is likely to be one of the individuals seen in previous years). The third **Surf Scoter** *M perspicillata* for Texel on 10 May was the latest ever for the Netherlands (all previous c 22 individuals were between 10 October and 22 April). Long-staying unringed adult male **Buffleheads** *Bucephala albeola* remained at Nes, Iceland, into April and at Barendrecht, Zuid-Holland, the Netherlands, until at least 18 May. Apart from several long-staying **American Black Ducks** *Anas rubripes* in western Europe, two arriving at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland, on 9 May constituted the fifth and sixth for Shetland. Three **Marbled**

204 Western Willet / Willet *Tringa semipalmata inornata*, Ribeira das Enguias, Portugal, 29 April 2009
(Alfonso Rocha)

205 Slaty-backed Gull / Kamtsjatkameeuw *Larus schistisagus*, adult, Riga, Latvia, 13 April 2009
(Paul Hacket)

206 Red-billed Tropicbirds / Roodsnavelkeerkringvogels *Phaeton aethereus*, Puerto del Carmen, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, 26 April 2009 *(Francisco Javier García Vargas)*

207 Surf Scoter / Brilzee-eend *Melanitta perspicillata*, adult male, with Common Eider / Eider *Somateria mollissima*, De Slufter, Texel, Noord-Holland, Netherlands, 10 May 2009 *(René Pop)*

208 Roseate Tern / Dougalls Stern *Sterna dougallii*, adult, Stellendam, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands, 7 May 2009 *(Phil Koken)*

209 Black-headed Heron / Zwartkopreiger *Ardea melanocephala*, Barragem de Poilao, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 21 March 2009 *(Cor Hopman)*

Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were present at Alverca saltpans, Tagus estuary, Portugal, on 29 March. Three at Salina on 9 May constituted the sixth record for Malta. In Iraq, during a survey of the Mesopotamian marshes this winter, 5200 were counted.

SEABIRDS Up to three **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* were photographed at close range near Puerto del Carmen, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, between 26 April and 1 May. On 24 March, a **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* flew off Eilat's north beach, Israel. From late March, a male **Atlantic Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* paired with a female Continental Great Cormorant *P c sinensis* was nesting in the cormorant colony near Lauwersoog, Friesland, and produced three young in early May, constituting the first breeding record of this taxon for the Netherlands. A peculiar migratory flock of 42 **Continental Great Cormorants**, nearly all adults, was flying north over the desert east of Boumalne Dadès in south-central Morocco on 29 March. In Kuwait, **Socotra Cormorants** *P nigrogularis* were seen regularly off Ras az Zur from 10 April onwards. The adult **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (Quaks), possibly of wild origin being unringed and very shy when first noted in southern Germany in 2001, which associated with a flock of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* when migrating from Germany over Switzerland and France to winter in Spain from 17 September 2008 onwards (Dutch Birding 31: 50-51, 2009), returned to Germany with a pair of White Storks on 2 March, when it was photographed at Fürth, Bayern (Birding World 22: 101, 2009). From 28 March into May, adult **Dalmatian Pelicans** *P crispus* were found at three sites in Hungary. On 15 and 17 May, two were seen in northern Italy (where there are less than 10 records). A male and two female **Magnificent Frigatebirds** *Fregata magnificens* were photographed at Curral Velho, Boa Vista, Cape Verde Islands, on 26 March; this is the only breeding site in the WP.

HERONS In Sweden, an **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* was photographed at Lindänget, Dalarna, on 25-26 April (www.club300.se/Gallery/ViewImage.aspx?imageID=9580). The **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* (which was seen in the Netherlands in the summers of 2006 and 2007 but not in 2008) stayed for its third consecutive winter at Berre l'Étang, Bouches-du-Rhône, France, from 11 November 2008 until 6 May (cf Dutch Birding 31: 125, 2009). A **Western Reef Egret** *Egretta gularis* was reported from Pont des Touradons, Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, France, on 12 May. In the Azores, two **American Great Egrets** *Casmerodius albus egretta* were still present at Paul da Praia, Terceira, on 2 April, one was on São Miguel on 3 and 26 April and one on Corvo on 6 May. The first **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* for Cape Verde Islands was photographed at Barragem de Poilao, Santiago, on 21 March and was seen again in April (there are less than a handful WP records). A **Mauritanian Heron** *A cinerea monicae* photographed at Hoja Llamera, Dhakla bay, on 22 April and another at Lagune de Khnifiss on 23 April were the first for Morocco (for the taxonomy of this pale endemic of extreme western Africa see, eg, Erard et al 1986, Le Héron Blanc du Banc d'Arguin *Ardea monicae*: ses affinités morphologiques, son histoire, Alauda 54: 161-169, and – in line with Bourne's Heron *A bournei* – the introductory chapter of Hazevoet 1995, The birds of the Cape Verde Islands, BOU Checklist 13, Tring). Amazingly, on 8 April, a **Purple Heron** *A purpurea* flew by a ship west of Gough Island (40°25'S 9°59'W) heading strongly towards South America, constituting the first record for the Tristan da Cunha archipelago.

IBISES TO GREBES In Syria, five **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus eremita* were present at Gattar cliff, Palmyra, on 14 March. In Iraq, both **African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* and **African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* were found this winter in the Mesopotamian marshes. Six unringed **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus minor* were present and two incubating in the colony of Greater Flamingo *P roseus* at Fuente de Piedra, Málaga, Spain. Already two were seen here in at least March 2003 and young were raised in 2007. In past years, several individuals have been present in the other main European breeding colonies of flamingos as well, ie, in south-eastern France and Sardinia. In Camargue, breeding attempts occurred in many years since 1994, successfully in, for instance, 2002 (see, eg, Dutch Birding 17: 29, 1995, 25: 186, 336, 2003, 29: 173, 2007, 30: 188, 2008). As in previous years, unringed individuals of presumed doubtful origin were again present in the Dutch/German Wadden Sea region, eg, one in Schleswig-Holstein in mid-April and five at Zwarte Haan, Friesland, on 9 May. In the Azores, the **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, remained until at least 17 May. In Spain, the one first seen at Begonto, Lugo, on 23 August 2007 was again present on 16 May.

RAPTORS TO BUSTARDS The c fifth **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus cearuleus* for Italy stayed at Bolzano from 28 March to 6 April. In Switzerland, singles were seen on 3 and 4 April. The fourth for the Netherlands was present for c 1 h near Bleskensgraaf, Zuid-Holland, in the evening of 22 May. A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* on Borðoy on 9 May was the first for the Faeroes. A first-year male **Red Kite** *M milvus* ringed and wing-tagged at Marybank, Muir of Ord, Scotland, on 1 July 2008 was photographed on Corvo, Azores, on 3 November 2008. On 12 April, a **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* left North Ronaldsay, Orkney, Scotland, to arrive 40 min later on Fair Isle, Shetland, where it was sitting for 20 min before flying out to sea again, towards mainland Shetland, where it arrived 35 min later. For the fourth year in succession, the first-ever breeding pair for the Netherlands at Oostvaardersplassen, Flevoland, had at least one hatchling; possibly three non-breeding pairs remained elsewhere (in Flevoland at Lepelaarsplassen and IJssel mouth and at Lauwersmeer, Groningen). It may mean that the wild (ie, not introduced) population is spreading west here in a similar way as, eg, in Denmark, where the species bred for the first time in 1996 and 1997, followed by no less than four nests in

210 Atlantic Great Cormorant / Grote Aalscholver *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*, Lier-Anderstad, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium, 21 April 2009 *(Kris De Rouck)*

211 Pallid Swift / Vale Gierzwaluw *Apus pallidus*, Seaforth, Merseyside, England, 4 May 2009 *(Steve Young/Birdwatch)*

1998 and 16 in 2006 (when 11 pairs produced 24 young). In April-May, up to two adult **Bearded Vultures** *Gypaetus barbatus* were frequently seen at Oukaimeden, High Atlas, Morocco, where the species is considered to be close to extinction. A near-adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* near Den Oever, Noord-Holland, on 25 April (and probably flying over Castricum, Noord-Holland, as well) was the second for the Netherlands; the first was in May 2001. In the Netherlands, for the eighth summer this century, a **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* appeared at Fochteloërveen, Drenthe/Friesland; two individuals were present here in the summers of 2001 and 2006, and singles in 2002-05 and 2007. In Malta, more than 25 **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus* were seen this spring until the last week of April. In Italy, a second-year female **Atlas Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus cirtensis* on Pantellaria appeared to be paired with a Common Buzzard *B buteo* which had been paired with another Atlas Long-legged in a previous year; there was a second mixed pair as well. In Syria, a flock of eight adult **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* was soaring above Shnan on 9 March. A second calendar-year male (Tõnn) born in western Estonia and tagged with a GPS transmitter spent the night of 24/25 April at Delden, Overijssel, without actually being seen by anyone, entering the Netherlands at 16:30 and leaving it again at 09:00. After leaving Estonia on 25 September 2008, Tõnn became well-known in Spain where he wintered at El Hondo wetlands, Alicante, from 11 December to 13 April (www.looduskalender.ee/en/node/2402); it may become the first rarity to be accepted in the Netherlands based on a GPS reading alone. In Israel, a **Verreaux's Eagle** *A verreauxii* was seen at Eilat mountains on 6 March and a **Tawny Eagle** *A rapax* flew over Lahav, northern Negev, on 7 March. The second **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *A heliaca* for Poland this spring was an immature photographed at Lublin on 9 May. A second-year **Spanish Imperial Eagle** *A adalberti* stayed at 'Tagdilt Track', five km south of Boumalne Dadès, Morocco, in late March. A first-summer male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Sulaibiya pivot fields on 10-11 May was the second for Kuwait; the first was found dead on 9 May 2002. The eighth **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* for Italy was an adult found dead on Lampedusa on 13 April. The fourth **American Coot** *Fulica americana* for Spain remained at A Frouxeira lake, Valdoviño, A Coruña, from 20 January to at least 30 March. In Israel, three **Demoiselle Cranes** *Grus virgo* flew over Arad, northern Negev, on 25 March and one stayed at Timorim, south Judean plains, on 18-21 April. In Sweden, one was seen at Dalarne from 10 May onwards. A nest of **Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* with three eggs this spring in the Sweida region concerned the first confirmed breeding for Syria. In the Tafilalt, Morocco, the endangered **Houbara Bustard** *C undulata* has been reported slightly

more frequently in recent years south of Erfoud, where from 30 March to 10 April two males were found (cf Dutch Birding 17: 30, 1995).

WADERS The fifth **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* for Norway was photographed at Stord, Hordaland, on 16 April. In Kuwait, 18 **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were seen at Manchester Club on 11 April and 20 at Doha spit on 15 April. In Spain, a **Cream-colored Courser** *Cursorius cursor* stayed at Ebro delta, Tarragona, from 25 April to at least the second week of May. On 20 April, five **Oriental Pratincoles** *Glareola maldivarum* were claimed in a large flock of Collared Pratincoles *G pratincola* and Black-winged Pratincoles *G nordmanni* at the pivot fields. In Scotland, a **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* turned up at Loch Stiapavat, Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides, on 6 April. In Egypt, two **Three-banded Plovers** *C tricollaris* were still present on 30 April at Tut Amon village, Aswan, where two were first seen a couple of years ago. A male **Kittlitz's Plover** *C pecuarius* at km 20 on 13-21 March was the first for Eilat since 2000; on 14 April, several **Caspian Plovers** *C asiaticus* were seen here as well. The **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Acre, Israel, remained until at least 20 March. The first for Belgium at Knokke, West-Vlaanderen, on 26 April was also seen just across the border in the Netherlands. In Syria, a flock of at least 2000 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* was allegedly present c 35 km north-west of Deir ez-Zor on 12 March; the next day, just 71 were found here which were all extremely flighty and it appeared that eight had been shot and eaten the previous day. An adult was photographed in Vienne, France, on 5 April. The sixth for Finland was found at Sunnanvik, Siuntio, on 6 May and there was one in Brandenburg, Germany, from 19 May. The first **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius hudsonicus* for Spain at Baldaio, A Coruña, from 17 January was last reported on 18 April (cf Dutch Birding 31: 127, 2009). The second for Scotland turned up at Uisead Point, Argyll, on 11 May. A **Eurasian Curlew** *N arquata* at Broome, Western Australia, from 13 April to 9 May was the second for Australia (the first was in November 2007). In the Azores, **Spotted Sandpipers** *Actitis macularius* were present on Terceira through April and at Madalena, Pico, on 3 April. A **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* on Foula, Shetland, on 6-9 May was the first in spring for Britain. An adult **Western Willet** *T semipalmata inornata* photographed at Ribeira das Enguias on 29 April was the first for Portugal; previous WP records in the 20th century included first-years in Lappland, Finland, in September 1983, in France in September 1998 and up to four in the Azores in 1979-2006 while the first-winter from October 1992 to April 1993 in Norway was an Eastern Willet *T s semipalmata* (it is not yet clear whether one reported in Italy on 2 February 2008 has been accepted). A **Marsh Sandpiper** *T stagnatilis* at Osdorper Binnenpolder, Amsterdam, Noord-Holland, was flying in display from 13 May onwards, associating with Common Redshanks *T totanus*. The second **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* for Syria was found at Jabboul on 7 March. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* stayed at Brazo del Este, Sevilla, Spain, on 2-16 April and in Camargue on 10 May.

GULLS A second-year **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* at Ma'agan Michael on 23-26 April was the fourth for Israel and the first along the Mediterranean coast. In Hungary, adult **Slender-billed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus genei* turned up at Berettyóújfalu on 12 April and at Apaj on 18 April. In Switzerland, one was present at Préverenges, Vaud, on 2-3 May, one at Chablais de Curdefin, Vaud, on 4 May and two at Chablais de Curdefin on 9 May. Adult **Bonaparte's Gulls** *C philadelphia* occurred at Cardiff, Glamorgan, Wales, on 8-30 March; Madrid, Spain, from 22 March; Zeluán, Avilés, Asturias, Spain, on 25 March; South Uist, Outer Hebrides, from 30 March to 10 April (presumably the same individual as in previous years); Höfn, Iceland, on 7 April; Swords Estuary, Dublin, Ireland, on 10 April; Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire, England, on 11-18 April; Tacumshin, Wexford, Ireland, on 18 April; Hvaleyrarlón, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, from 1 May; and on St Mary's, Scilly, England, on 5-6 May. In Sweden, an adult **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* stayed at Luspholmen, Lycksele Lappmark, from 19 to at least 23 April. An adult **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* turned up at Lerwick, Shetland, on 11 May. An adult **Slaty-backed Gull** *L schistisagus* at Rumbula rubbish dump, 12 km south-east of Riga, on 13-18 April was the first for Latvia; it concerned the same individual found as the first for the WP at 200 km distance at Klaipeda rubbish dump, Lithuania, on 17-20 November 2008 (Dutch Birding 30: 426, 2008, 31: 55, 2009). In West Saharan Morocco, a few **Great Black-backed Gulls** *L marinus* were found, eg, at Dakhla on 20 April. Further north along the south-western Moroccan coast, at least 10 adult **Cape Gulls** *L dominicanus vetula* remained at Lagune de Khniffis from at least early March onwards (cf Dutch Birding 31: 127, 2009). On 10 April, for instance, a pair was seen distantly on a nest, a second pair was swimming, one individual was exchanging positions on a nest with a Yellow-legged Gull *L michahellis*, and a flock of five was present, too. Interestingly, they did not show primary moult by late April, when two first-winters were seen in Dakhla harbour as well.

TERNS In the Azores, two **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus* were seen on Ilhéu da Vila on 3 May and a **Bridled Tern** *O anaethetus* on Ilhéu de Santo António, Pico, on 24 April. An influx of **White-winged Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* occurred in Denmark, northern Germany and the Netherlands from 8 May onwards. The highest totals were 76 in Germany on 11 May and 85 in Denmark on 12 May. In the Netherlands, the total number increased from 12 on 10 May to more than 70 on 12-13 May, while **Whiskered Terns** *C hybrida* were also seen in high numbers at several sites (wit a largest flock of 12 on 13 May). Previous spring influxes of White-winged in these countries occurred on 13-15 May 1997 (much higher numbers with several 1000s in Denmark, northern Germany and southern Sweden but just up to 400 in the Netherlands), 13-15 May 2005 (400 in southern

212 Purple Heron / Puperreiger *Ardea purpurea*, off Gough, Tristan da Cunha archipelago, South Atlantic Ocean (40°25′91″S, 9°59′53″W), 8 April 2009 *(Phil Palmer)* **213** Magnificent Frigatebird / Amerikaanse Fregatvogel *Fregata magnificens*, Curral Velho, Boavista, Cape Verde Islands, 26 March 2009 *(Jan van der Laan)* **214** Chinese Shrike / Chinese Klauwier *Lanius arenarius*, male, Bibi Shirvan, Golestan, Iran, 19 January 2009 *(Edwin Winkel)* **215** Caspian Plover / Kaspische Plevier *Charadrius asiaticus*, Mandria beach, Cyprus, 9 April 2009 *(Paul & Andrea Kelly/irishbirdingimages.com)* **216** Cricket Warbler / Krekelprinia *Spiloptila clamans*, between Dakhla and Aousserd, Morocco, 21 April 2009 *(Peter Adriaens)* **217** Mauritanian Heron / Mauritaanse Blauwe Reiger *Ardea cinerea monicae*, Hoja Llamera, Dhakla bay, Morocco, 22 April 2009 *(Pieter Vantieghem)*

218 Maghreb Tawny Owl / Maghrebbosuil *Strix aluco mauritanica*, Taroudannt, Morocco, 12 April 2009 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)* **219** Houbara Bustard / Westelijke Kraagtrap *Chlamydotis undulata*, Merzouga, Tafilalt, Morocco, 10 April 2009 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)* **220** Semicollared Flycatcher / Balkanvliegenvanger *Ficedula semitorquata*, Curdefin, Vaud, Switzerland, 5 May 2009 *(Beni Sutter)* **221** Collared Flycatcher / Withalsvliegenvanger *Ficedula albicollis*, first-summer male, Southwell, Portland, Dorset, England, 2 May 2009 *(Paul Hackett)*

Denmark but just 10 in the Netherlands) and 14-22 May 2007 (the largest-ever for the Netherlands and Belgium with more than 2000 and c 300, respectively) (Dutch Birding 19: 135, 1997, 27: 214, 2005, 29: 198-199, 241-251, 2007). In a recent paper, it has been shown that **American Sandwich Tern (Cabot's Tern)** *Sterna (sandvicensis) acuflavida* should be regarded as a separate species from European Sandwich Tern *S (s) sandvicensis* (Cayenne Tern *eurygnatha* becoming a subspecies of *acuflavida*) (Efe et al 2009, Multigene phylogeny and DNA barcoding indicate that the Sandwich tern complex (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*, Laridae, Sternini) comprises two species, Mol Phylogen Evol doi:10.1016/j.ympev.2009.03.030). The first WP record of this taxon concerns a ringing recovery of an individual ringed as a chick on 23 June 1978 in North Carolina, USA, and found dead on 23 December 1978 at Veerse Meer, Zeeland, the Netherlands, and the second was one ringed as a chick on 25 June 1984 in North Carolina and found dead on 25 November 1984 in England. For a paper on the identification, see Dutch Birding 29: 273-287, 2007. On 11 April and 17 May, a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S bengalensis* was roosting at Serchio river mouth, Lucca, Italy. On 13 May, one was present at Les Grangettes, Vaud, Switzerland. The first for Galicia, Spain, was photographed at Ria de Foz, Lugo, on 17 May. In Ireland, adult **Forster's Terns** *S forsteri* were seen in Galway in late April and at Tacumshin, Wexford, from at least 22 April to 7 May. A **Roseate Tern** *S dougallii* was roosting at Piémanson, Camargue, on 29 March. In the Netherlands, an adult wearing English ringes attracted many birders at Stellendam, Zuid-Holland, on 7-9 May.

DOVES TO HOOPOES In Sweden, the adult **Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* first present at

Falköping, Västergötland, in the winter of 2005/06 remained until at least 15 April. In Finland, a long-stayer was last seen at Suomussalmi on 26 April. In Kuwait, a total of four **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* was reported between 10 and 16 April. A first-year **Pale Barn Owl** *Tyto alba alba* was found freshly dead at Revtangen, Rogaland, Norway, on 11 March. In the Netherlands, a **Dark Barn Owl** *T a guttata* ringed as nestling at Weesp, Noord-Holland, on 13 July 2005 was found dead on 2 February 2006 (possibly dead for some time) in Ukraine at 2361 km distance; other recent ring recoveries included the 10th from England, being one ringed in Gelderland on 4 June 2007 reported as car victim in Norfolk on 12 July 2008. In Scotland, **Snowy Owls** *Bubo scandiacus* remained on Isle of Lewis until at least 8 May; near Holm, Orkney, until at least 8 May (male); on North Uist, Outer Hebrides, until at least 28 April; and on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, until 30 April. At least one of the up to three individuals of the Channel Islands was still present on 6 May. The first-winter in Cornwall, England, was seen again on 19 April. In Denmark, the second calendar-year female which was wintering on Texel, Noord-Holland, and seen on its way north on the Wadden Sea islands of Terschelling and (until 19 March) Ameland, Friesland, remained in Nordjylland at four sites up to 200 km apart from 26 March to 18 April, constituting the first for Denmark for seven years. In Niedersachsen, Germany, one was reported on 12 April. An immature male photographed at Skagen, Nordjylland, just before flying out to sea towards Sweden in the evening of 23 April, was tentatively identified as the one that wintered in Belgium. In early April, **Maghreb Tawny Owls** *Strix aluco mauritanica* were found nesting in the town centres of Marrakech and Taroudannt, Morocco. In the Netherlands, away from the breeding area in Drenthe, a **Boreal Owl** *Aegolius funereus* killed by a Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* was found at St Walrick, Gelderland, on 29 April. A **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* around Seaforth and Crosby, Merseyside, England, from 30 April to 10 May performed well for many birders. In Cádiz, Spain, four **Little Swifts** *A affinis* were seen at Sierra de la Plata on 20 March and five at Guadalquivir river mouth on 21 March. Reportedly, a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* flew over Lauwersmeer, Groningen, on 21 May. The wintering nominate **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* at Jahra farms, Kuwait, stayed until 11 April. A **Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* at Stöðvarfjörður from 20 April was the 11th for Iceland and the first twitchable.

LARKS TO WAGTAILS In Israel, a **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* turned up at Hameyshar, southern Negev, on 25 March. In West Saharan Morocco, probably 100s were present along the road from Dakhla to Aousserd in late April and early May; **Black-crowned Finch Larks** *Eremopterix nigriceps* were even more numerous in this area that period. In Germany, a **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* turned up in Schleswig-Holstein on 3 April. The 21st **Common Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* for Britain, the first since 1996 and the first truly twitchable since 1975, was a flighty individual at Dungeness, Kent, England, from 29 April to 4 May. In Kuwait, single **White-headed Wagtails** *Motacilla leucocephala* were seen at Jahra farms on 11 April and at a highway interchange on 15 April. The first **Citrine Wagtail** *M citreola* for Christmas Island (and the third for Australia) was a female photographed on 6 May. The second **Moroccan Wagtail** *M subpersonata* for Spain was photographed at Málaga harbour, Málaga, on 19-20 March; the first was in Cádiz on 24 March 2007. Recently, photographs have appeared of an **Amur Wagtail** *M leucopsis* at Kalleberg, Farsund, Vest-Agder, Norway, on 1-2 November 2008; the first for the WP was a male at Seaham, Durham, England, on 5-6 April 2005.

BULBULS TO THRUSHES In Jordan, **White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis* now appears well-established and common at Azraq. An **Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* stayed at Spodsbjerg, Nordjylland, on 12 April and another near Eibergen, Gelderland, the Netherlands, on 26-29 April. A remarkable two were photographed together at Mill, Noord-Brabant, the Netherlands, on 7 May but not found the next day. The first twitchable for Sweden since 1986 was seen at Utlängan, Gotland, on 12-13 May. A **Western Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes galactotes* was digiscoped at Migra Ferha, Malta, on 17 April. In Italy, one was trapped at Ventotene, Lazio, and two were found on Pantelleria in late April. Also in Malta, the c 10th adult male **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussierii* at Xaghra L-Hamra from 30 November 2008 was last seen on 10 March. A **Black Wheatear** *O leucura* on Pantellaria on 24 April was the first for Italy since 40 years. A male **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* near Stadskanaal, Groningen, on 30 April and 1 May was the ninth for the Netherlands. If accepted, a **Dusky Thrush** *Turdus eunomus* at Kirkonkylä, Tarvasjoki, on 8 April will be the seventh for Finland.

WARBLERS TO FLYCATCHERS At Goulmima, Tafilalt, Morocco, a pair of **Maghreb Scrub Warblers** *Scotocerca inquieta saharae* had four fledglings on 9 April. In West Saharan Morocco, four **Cricket Warblers** *Spiloptila clamans* were seen along the road from Dakhla to Aousserd on 22 March and in late April; on 8 May, up to nine were found. In Spain, a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* was trapped and ringed at Llobregat Delta, Barcelona, on 23 April and the fifth **Marsh Warbler** *A palustris* was trapped at Ivars d'Urgell, Lleida, on 10 April. Since spring 2006, **Saharan Olivaceous Warblers** *A pallidus reiseri* have been found frequently in south-eastern Morocco (see Dutch Birding 28: 180, 2006, 30: 199, 2008, Br Birds 102: 116-121, 2009). Until recently, its status in Morocco was poorly documented and it was questioned whether it occurred irregularly (cf Dutch Birding 27: 302-307, 2005). In March-April, the taxon was found again at various places in Morocco with birds singing at Aoufouss (two), Merzouga, Ouarzazate (two) and Touroug (four) and, therefore, it can be assumed that it has been simply overlooked in the past. On 13 April, a **Western Olivaceous Warbler** *A opacus* was found on Linosa,

222 White-throated Sparrow / Witkeelgors *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire, England, 19 April 2009 *(John Carter)*

223 Desert Sparrows / Woestijnmussen *Passer simplex*, fledglings, Merzouga, Tafilalt, Morocco, 30 March 2009 *(Arnoud B van den Berg)*

224 Eastern Subalpine Warbler / Oostelijke Baardgrasmus *Sylvia cantillans albistriata*, male, Portland Bill, Dorset, England, 9 May 2009 *(Nick Hopper)*

225 Brown-headed Cowbird / Bruinkopkoevogel *Molothrus ater*, Fair Isle, Shetland, Scotland, 10 May 2009 *(Steve Minton)*

Italy. The third or fourth **Booted Warbler** *A caligatus* for Israel was trapped at Mitzpe Ramon on 3 May. A male **Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda* was trapped on Porquerolles, Hyères, France, on 22 April. In England, a male **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** *S cantillans albistriata* was photographed at Portland, Dorset, on 9 May. A male **Sardinian Warbler** *S melanocephala* was trapped at Hoburgsklippan, Gotland, Sweden, on 12 May. The first **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* in spring for Britain, first misidentified as Greenish Warbler *P trochiloides*, stayed at Kilnsea, East Yorkshire, on 12-13 May. An **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *P orientalis* at Portland, Dorset, on 1 May was found by birders looking for a second-year male **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*, which stayed nearby from 28 April to 2 May. Another **Collared Flycatcher** attracted many birders at Crail, Fife, Scotland, on 16-19 May. In Malta, a record total of eight **Semicollared Flycatchers** *F semitorquata* was seen this spring until 7 April. A second-year male photographed at Chablais de Curdefin on 5-6 May was the first for Switzerland. An **Atlas Flycatcher** *F speculigera* on Pantellaria on 22-26 April was the second for Italy and Europe.

SHRIKES TO COWBIRDS In Iran, two **Chinese Shrikes** *Lanius arenarius* were photographed at Bibi Shirvan, Golestan, on 19 January. The second **Balearic Woodschat Shrike** *L senator badius* for Ireland was identified at Duncormick, Wexford, from 12 May onwards (the first was in Cork in June 2002). In Egypt, a **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* was seen just south of Sehel island in the Nile valley at Aswan on 25 March, far away from the sedentary populations, chiefly around Suez. In the Netherlands, a remarkable flock of up to nine **Spanish Sparrows** *Passer hispaniolensis* (including three males) stayed at Eemshaven, Groningen, on 9-12 April and single males were seen on Texel on 17-20 April and at Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 20-21 April and 26-27 April; the only previous records concerned single males in May 1997 and May 2000. In West Saharan Morocco, many **Desert Sparrows** *P simplex* and two male and five female **Sudan Golden Sparrows** *P luteus* were photographed between Dakhla and Aousserd on 21 April. In south-eastern Morocco, **Desert Sparrow** has become rare in recent years, being replaced by House Sparrows *P domesticus* at former strongholds like café Yasmina near Merzouga; on 30 March, three fledglings were being fed by a male while the female was sitting on the only nest known in this area this spring. In Italy, three **Tunisian Chaffinches** *Fringilla coelebs spodiogenys* were singing on Pantelleria during the period; several were also present in the past two years. The first **Mongolian Finches** *Bucanetes mongolicus* for Kuwait were up to 12 at Sabah Al-Ahmed natural reserve on 5-20 March. In England, an adult male **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* spent the winter near Runcorn, Cheshire, from 8 November 2008 to 1 March and then stayed at Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire, on 11-20 April. In Norway, male **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos* were present in Vest-Agder on 11-18 March and at Røa, Oslo, on 28-30 March. At what was once the only known remaining site for **Jankowski's Bunting** *E jankowskii* in Manchuria, China, the species could no longer be found this spring, due to the work of a combine harvester. A male **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* was reported from Ångermanland, Sweden, on 1 May. A **Brown-headed Cowbird** *Molothrus ater* on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 8-10 May was the second for Britain and third for the WP; previous records were an adult female in Telemark, Norway, in June 1987 and a male in Strathclyde, Scotland, in April 1988.

For a number of reports, Birding World, Birdwatch, Op het Vinkentouw, Ornithos, Sovon-nieuws, www.birdguides.com, www.rarebirdalert.co.uk and www.netfugl.dk were consulted. We wish to thank Peter Adriaens, Ahmed Aidek (Syria), Peter Alfrey, Rashed Al-Hajji, Yousef Ali Alzaoby (Syria), Mindy Baha El Din, Max Berlijn, Jan Bisschop, Richard Bonser, Sander Bot, Henri Bouwmeester, Rolf Christensen, José Luis Copete, Andrea Corso (Italy), Pierre-André Crochet, Edouard Dansette, Davy Degroote, Eric Didner, Hugues Dufourny, Enno Ebels, David Erterius, Lee Evans, Marcin Faber, Balduin Fischer, Dick Forsman, Jacques Franchimont, Tommy Frandsen, Raymond Galea (Malta), Steve Gantlett, Martin Garner, Chris Gibbins, Martin Gottschling, Jeff Gordon, Barak Granit, Dick Groenendijk, Geert Groot Koerkamp, Marcello Grussu, Carlos Gutiérrez Expósito, Ricard Gutiérrez (Spain), Paul Hackett, Axel Halley, Dick Hoek, Remco Hofland (Syria), Niklas Holmström, Jesper Hornskov (Manchuria), Moldován István, Justin Jansen, João Jara (Birds & Nature Tours), Diego Jerez, Frédéric Jiguet, Olof Jönsson, Szabolcs Kókay, Yann Kolbeinsson, Kevin Lambeets, James Lidster, André van Loon, Ralf Martin, Dave McAdams, Anthony McGeehan, Richard Millington, Dominic Mitchell, Geir Mobakken (Utsira), Nial Moores, Killian Mullarney, Frank Neijts, Urban Olsson, Gert Ottens, Phil Palmer (Gough), Andy Paterson, Yoav Perlman (IRDC), Lisa Preston, Sjoerd Radstaak, Magnus Robb, Staffan Rodebrand, Luciano Ruggieri, Mudhafar Salim (Iraq), Michael Sammut, George Sangster, Jelle Scharringa, Urmas Sellis, Roy Slaterus, Gerrit Speek, Vincent van der Spek, Ray Tipper, Jugal Tiwari, Petteri Tolvanen, Joop Treep, David Uit de Weerd, Pieter Vantieghem, Matthieu Vaslin, Martin Vavrik, Roland van der Vliet, Magnus Ullman, Mattias Ullman, Fred Visscher, Edwin Winkel (Golestan), Rik Winters, Pim Wolf, Tim Worfolk, Steven Wytema, Emin Yogurtcuoglu and Mark Zekhuis (Hormezgan) for their help in compiling this review.

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Recente meldingen

Dit overzicht van recente meldingen van zeldzame en interessante vogels in Nederland beslaat voornamelijk de periode maart-april 2009. De vermelde gevallen zijn merendeels niet geverifieerd en het overzicht is niet volledig. Alle vogelaars die de moeite namen om hun waarnemingen aan ons door te geven worden hartelijk bedankt. Waarnemers van soorten in Nederland die worden beoordeeld door de Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna wordt verzocht hun waarnemingen zo spoedig mogelijk toe te zenden aan: CDNA, p/a Duinlustparkweg 98A, 2082 EG Santpoort-Zuid, Nederland, e-mail cdna@dutchbirding.nl. Hiertoe gelieve men gebruik te maken van CDNA-waarnemingsformulieren die eveneens verkrijgbaar zijn op bovenstaand adres, of via de website van de DBA op www.dutchbirding.nl.

VOORJAARSTREK De voorjaarstrek was, behoudens enkele topdagen, vaak matig, zeker vergeleken met 2008. De hoogste aantallen werden gemeld bij Breskens, Zeeland, waar in de maanden maart en april ruim 300 000 vogels passeerden. Dat was ruim de helft minder dan vorig jaar, toen in deze periode alleen al 485 000 Graspiepers *Anthus pratensis* werden genoteerd.

EENDEN TOT IBISSEN Op 30 maart werden er nog 10 **Dwergganzen** *Anser erythropyus* geteld bij Petten, Noord-Holland, maar daarna nam het aantal waarnemingen zoals gebruikelijk snel af. Op 2 maart was er een melding van een adulte **Groenlandse Kolgans** *A albifrons flavirostris* bij Garrelsweer, Groningen. **Roodhalsganzen** *Branta ruficolis* liepen nog rond op meer dan 30 plekken verspreid over het land; welke vogels wild waren en welke tam was moeilijk te zeggen. Het vermelden waard zijn drie exemplaren die op 23 april in een groep Brandganzen *B leucopsis* langs trektelpost Lauwersmeer Kustweg, Groningen, vlogen. Het optreden van **Witbuikrotgans** *B hrota* en **Zwarte Rotgans** *B nigricans* bracht weinig verrassingen met zich mee; de gehele periode werden beide soorten in klein aantal aangetroffen op enkele bekende rotgansplekken, vooral in het Waddengebied. Het populaire vrouwtje **Witoogeend** *Aythya nyroca* van Huizen, Noord-Holland, werd voor het laatst op 31 maart waargenomen. Ook op zeven andere plekken werd de soort aangetroffen maar soms onder 'verdachte' omstandigheden. Op 12 april zwom een mannetje **Ringsnaveleend** *A collaris* op de Hoogekampse Plas bij Utrecht, Utrecht. Op 18 maart werd een mannetje **Kleine Topper** *A affinis* ontdekt in het Waterpark Oude Zeug, Noord-Holland. Een dag later bleek er nog een tweede mannetje te zwemmen dat in snaveltekening en kopvorm een paar kleine afwijkingen van het 'standaardbeeld' van deze soort vertoonde. Tot 31 maart werden ze regelmatig samen aangetroffen, terwijl één van beide nog tot 14 april bleef. Op deze plek werden ook enkele hybride duikeenden gezien, waaronder de hybride **Ringsnaveleend x Kuifeend** *A collaris x fuligula* (van 21 tot 31 maart), die van 1 tot 20 maart nog in de nabijgelegen Dijkwielen verbleef. De meest bekeken **IJseend** *Clangula hyemalis* in deze periode zwom op 21 maart eveneens in Waterpark

226 Kleine Topper / Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, mannetje, Oude Zeug, Noord-Holland, 30 maart 2009 *(Eric Menkveld)*

227 Grote Aalscholver / Atlantic Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* (achter), Aalscholver / Continental Great Cormorant *P c sinensis* (voor) en Kuifaalscholvers / European Shags *P aristotelis*, adult (rechts), Noordersluis, IJmuiden, Noord-Holland, 5 april 2009 *(Enno B Ebels)*

Oude Zeug. Daarnaast werden er tot half april van trektelposten langs de kust 12 langsvliegende gemeld. Het mannetje **Buffelkopeend** *Bucephala albeola* van Barendrecht, Zuid-Holland, bleef tot in mei. Een mannetje **Amerikaanse Smient** *Anas americana* bevond zich van 9 tot 21 maart bij Westdorpe, Zeeland. In het noordwesten van het land zorgde een of twee eerstejaars mannetjes voor een reeks waarnemingen, namelijk op 12 april in de Kroonspolders op Vlieland, Friesland; van 15 tot 17 april in de Dijkgatsweide, Wieringermeer; van 19 tot 25 april en van 27 april tot 1 mei op de noordpunt van Texel, Noord-Holland; en van 26 tot 28 april in Mariëndal bij Den Helder, Noord-Holland. Een mannetje **Siberische Taling** *A formosa* stond in de avond van 29 maart c 30 seconden op een slootkant nabij Son, Noord-Brabant, net lang genoeg om op de foto's te worden vastgelegd. Tot 8 april verbleef minstens één **Amerikaanse Wintertaling** *A carolinensis* nog op Texel: tot 17 maart in Dijkmanshuizen en daarna in Waal en Burg. Andere exemplaren verbleven van 19 maart tot 12 april bij Kamperland, Zeeland, vanaf 11 april in het Lauwersmeergebied, Friesland/Groningen, en van 21 tot 25 april in de Sliedrechtse Biesbosch, Zuid-Holland. Een curieuze waarneming was die van een **Kwartel** *Coturnix coturnix* (of was het een Japanse Kwartel *C japonica*?) die op 23 maart in een tuinvijver in Koewacht, Zeeland, belandde en een dag later dood werd gevonden; zonder de gemaakte foto's zouden maar weinigen het geloven... Vanaf 24 april werden er ook nog eens 10 geringd in de Kennemerduinen, Noord-Holland. Vanaf eind maart bouwde een mannetje **Grote Aalscholver** *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* samen met een vrouwtje Aalscholver *P c sinensis* een boomnest op het Egbert Schuldinkeiland bij de sluizen van Lauwersoog, Groningen (het paar kreeg drie jongen). Meerdere Grote Aalscholvers werden nog gemeld van IJmuiden, Noord-Holland. Het paar **Kuifaalscholver** *P aristotelis* van IJmuiden baltste ook in deze periode nog regelmatig maar bouwde waarschijnlijk geen nest; ook elders langs de Noordzeekust waren nog exemplaren aanwezig. Mogelijk wilde **Kwakken** *Nycticorax nycticorax* werden gezien op 25 en 30 april bij Groede, Zeeland; op 26 april in Cabauw, Utrecht; op 27 april vanaf trektelpost IJmeerdijk bij Almere, Flevoland; en op 28 april bij Cadzand, Zeeland, en in Bloemendaal, Noord-Holland. Een groepje van drie **Koereigers** *Bubulcus ibis* verbleef op 18 april bij Nunspeet, Gelderland. Ook op c acht andere plekken werden exemplaren waargenomen, zoals in Waterland, Noord-Holland, van 17 tot 25 april. Een vroege **Zwarte Ooievaar** *Ciconia nigra* werd op 16 maart gefotografeerd nabij Ter Apel, Groningen. Mogelijk dezelfde betrof een in Hongarije geringde adulte vogel (wit 50P9) die zich van 29 maart tot 1 april ophield bij Vlagtwedde, Groningen. Vanaf 6 april werd de soort op 10 andere plekken aangetroffen, waaronder een groepje van vier op 14 april in de Engbertsdijksvenen, Overijssel, en een veel bekeken adulte op 25 april vanaf trektelpost Breskens. Een overvliegende **Zwarte Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* werd op 20 maart gemeld boven Almere.

SPERWERS TOT STRANDLOPERS Door de trektellers in het land werden in deze periode in totaal 83 **Zwarte Wouwen** *Milvus migrans*, 91 **Rode Wouwen** *M milvus*, vijf **Zeearenden** *Haliaeetus albicilla*, 28 **Grauwe Kiekendieven** *Circus pygargus* en 91 **Visarenden** *Pandion haliaetus* genoteerd. Op 10 april stelden 137 **Sperwers** *Accipiter nisus*, 76 **Buizerds** *Buteo buteo* en acht **Slechtvalken** *Falco peregrinus* de lokale telpostrecords bij Breskens scherper. Op 24 april verraste een **Stellers Zeearend** *H pelagicus* de aanwezige vogelaars bij Breskens. De vogel hing even rond boven de telpost en stak daarna de Westerschelde over. Op 26 april werd hij teruggevonden bij Zoutelande, Zeeland, waar hij een dag later omstreeks 22:30 door zijn eigenaar werd teruggevangen. Het ging om een adult vrouwtje, afkomstig uit Merlin Zoo te Sint Laureins, Oost-Vlaanderen, België. De tweede **Aasgier** *Neophron percnopterus* voor Nederland stond op 25 april omstreeks 08:45 korte tijd op een akker in Polder Waard-Nieuwland nabij Den Oever, Noord-Holland, alvorens in noordwestelijke richting weg te vliegen. Waarschijnlijk dezelfde vogel vloog om 11:15 over het Noordhollands Duinreservaat bij Castricum. Het eerste geval was op 24 en 25 mei 2001 bij Epen, Limburg. Het was dit voorjaar weer raak met **Steppekiekendieven** *C macrourus*. Zo vlogen er adulte mannetjes op 10 en 11 april langs Breskens, op 11 april langs trektelpost Lauwersmeer Kustweg, en op 12 april langs de Eemshaven, Groningen. 'Ringtails' werden gefotografeerd op 22 april bij Vught, Noord-Brabant (eerstejaars), op 24 april bij Breskens (adulte) en bij Kamperhoek, Flevoland, en op 25 april in de Bantpolder, Friesland (mogelijk dezelfde als van Kamperhoek), en in de Eemshaven. Een eerstejaars mannetje **Bastaardarend** *Aquila clanga* bracht de nacht van 24 op 25 april door bij Delden, Overijssel, zo bleek uit het signaal van de GPS-zender die hij bij zich droeg; hij arriveerde op Nederlands grondgebied om 16:30 op 24 april en passeerde de grens de volgende ochtend om 09:00, zonder door iemand te zijn gezien. De vogel, die bekend staat onder de naam Tõnn, was afkomstig uit het westen van Estland en overwinterde van 11 december tot 13 april bij Alicante, Spanje (www.looduskalender.ee/en/node/2402). **Roodpootvalken** *F vespertinus* werden gemeld op 19 april bij de Vijfhoek bij Diemen, Noord-Holland, en bij Cadzand, op 26 april op de Hoog Buurlose Heide bij Hoenderloo, Gelderland, en op 30 april bij Ferwerd, Friesland. Er was een melding van een zuidwaarts vliegende **Giervalk** *F rusticolus* voor de kust van Egmond aan Zee, Noord-Holland, op 4 maart. De trek van **Kraanvogels** *Grus grus* in het begin van deze periode was spectaculair. Vooral op 1 maart moet de lucht op enkele plekken in de oostelijke helft van het land donker zijn geweest; op www.waarneming.nl werden die dag meer dan 370 waarnemingen ingevoerd en www.trektellen.nl sloot af met bijna 2800 exemplaren, waarvan er alleen al 1198 over de Hamert, Limburg, vlogen. Na 1 maart nam het aantal doortrekkers snel af. Vanaf 11 april doken op meer dan 20 plekken – overwegend in de westelijke helft van het land – **Steltkluten** *Himantopus himantopus* op. Het hoogste aantal bijeen bedroeg vier op 21 april bij Dussen, Noord-Brabant. De eerste **Morinelplevieren** *Charadrius morinellus* van het jaar verschenen op 8 april op de Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland; op 9 april op de Sallandse Heuvelrug, Overijssel; en bij Westdorpe; op 10 april bij Camperduin, Noord-Holland; en op 11 april in de Eemshaven. Daarna volgden nog ten minste vijf waarnemingen van solitaire exemplaren. De eerste **Amerikaanse Goudplevier** *Pluvialis dominica* voor België liet zich op 26 april ook op Nederlands grondgebied aanschouwen, namelijk in Het Zwin bij Cadzand. **Gestreepte Strandlopers** *Calidris melanotos* verbleven van 16 tot 23 april bij Waddinxveen, Zuid-Holland; op 17 en 18 april bij Scherpenisse, Zeeland; op 25 april in De Blikken bij Groede; op 16 april in het Harderbroek, Flevoland; en op 27 april in de Brabantse Biesbosch, Noord-Brabant. **Poelruiters** *Tringa stagnatilis* werden waargenomen op 17 en 18 april bij Scherpenisse; op 19 april bij Hilversum, Noord-Holland; op 20 en 21 april bij Stavenisse, Zeeland; op 21 april in de Oostvaardersplassen bij Almere; op 22 april in de Wevers Inlaag bij Serooskerke, Zeeland; op 23 en 24 april in De Blikken; op 26 april bij Paesens, Friesland; van 27 tot 29 april in de Brabantse Biesbosch; op 27 april bij Almere; op 28 en 30 april in de Ezumakeeg, Friesland; en op 30 april bij Driel, Gelderland. Van 27 tot 29 april bevond een **Grauwe Franjepoot** *Phalaropus lobatus* zich op het Jaap Deensgat in het Lauwersmeergebied, Groningen. Vanaf 30 april verbleef een exemplaar in de Ezumakeeg. De enige **Rosse Franjepoot** *P fulicarius* van deze periode vloog op 6 maart langs Camperduin.

JAGERS TOT SPECHTEN De enige melding van **Middelste Jager** *Stercorarius pomarinus* was op 10 april langs Huisduinen, Noord-Holland. Verspreid over het land werden ruim 1500 doortrekkende **Zwartkopmeeuwen** *Larus melanocephalus* gemeld. Bijna de helft daarvan vloog langs Breskens waar het landelijke dagrecord werd verbroken: op 10 april passeerden er 224, ruim 50 meer dan het oude record dat was neergezet in 2008. Een hoog aantal van 431 (346 adulte, vijf vierde-kalenderjaar, 66 derde-kalenderjaar en 14 tweede-kalenderjaar vogels) werd op 9 april geteld in de Deesche Watergang bij Kattendijke, Zeeland. De overwinterende eerste-winter **Kleine Burgemeester** *L glaucoides* van Den Helder werd voor het laatst op 18 april gezien. Andere pleisterden op 7 maart op Vlieland; op 15 maart op Terschelling, Friesland; op 6 april bij Westkapelle, Zeeland; op 10 en 12 april in de Eemshaven; en op 17 en 21 tot 23 april langs de Brouwersdam, Zeeland. Langsvliegende werden gemeld op 20 maart en 24 april bij Egmond aan Zee; op 15 maart bij Petten; op 1 april bij Scheveningen, Zuid-Holland; en op 17 april in de Eemshaven. Op ongeveer negen plekken langs de westkust werden nog **Grote Burgemeesters** *L hyperboreus* waargenomen. Het meeste bezoek kreeg een eerstewinter in Scheveningen, die de gehele periode bleef. De eerste **Reuzenstern** *Hydroprogne caspia* van het jaar werd al op 29 maart gefotografeerd bij telpost Hoekse Sluis bij Bergambacht, Zuid-Holland. Een dag later verbleven er exemplaren op het Vossemeer, Overijssel, en bij Makkum, Friesland. Het hoogste aantal bijeen be-

228 Steppekiekendief / Pallid Harier *Circus macrourus*, Kamperhoek, Flevoland, 24 april 2009 *(Hans ter Haar)*
229 Steppekiekendief / Pallid Harier *Circus macrourus*, Bantpolder, Friesland, 25 april 2009 *(Roef Mulder)*
230 Amerikaanse Smient / American Wigeon *Anas americana*, mannetje, Robbejager, Texel, Noord-Holland, 19 april 2009 *(René Pop)*

droeg vijf op 5 april bij Makkum en op 25 april bij Workum, Friesland. In totaal werden er deze periode ook 12 genoteerd op verschillende trektelposten in het land. Er werden slechts vijf doortrekkende **Lachsterns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* gemeld, namelijk op 23 april bij Middelburg, Zeeland, op 25 april langs de trektelposten van Breskens, Noordwijk, Zuid-Holland, en Lauwersmeer Kustweg, en op 30 april bij Huisduinen. **Witwangsterns** *Chlidonias hybrida* doken op 20 april op in het Rammegors bij Sint-Philipsland, Zeeland (twee), op 27 april op het Reindersmeer bij Nieuw-Bergen, Limburg, en op 27 en 28 april in De Blikken. Een **Dougalls Stern** *Sterna dougallii* werd op 13 april gemeld bij Huisduinen. Op 28 april werd een ongewoon hoog aantal **Noordse Sterns** *S paradisaea* in het binnenland aangetroffen, waaronder maximaal 86 in de Brabantse Biesbosch, 31 bij Dodewaard, Gelderland, en 12 bij Weurt, Gelderland. Verrassend was de melding van een langsvliegende **Papegaaiduiker** *Fratercula arctica* op 2 april boven de Westerschelde bij Terneuzen, Zeeland. Op 18 april werden tijdens een vliegtuigtelling boven het Continentaal Plat zeven exemplaren opgemerkt op een verder angstvallig lege zee. In Gelderland broedden twee paren **Oehoe** *Bubo bubo* elk ten minste één jong uit en in Limburg waren zeker drie paren aanwezig, waarvan één met vier jongen. Een vierde paar nestelde op c 10 m over de grens in Duitsland. Een paar van vorig jaar was verdwenen, nadat een exemplaar omkwam bij een botsing tegen een trein; de overgebleven vogel is nadien nog slechts eenmaal waargenomen. Ten slotte was er in Zuid-Limburg nog een – wellicht solitaire – roepende vogel aanwezig. De herkomst van exemplaren in de omgeving van Amersfoort, Utrecht, Zeist, Utrecht, en Eindhoven, Noord-Brabant, was onduidelijk, maar het is de vraag of het wilde vogels betrof. De overwinterende **Sneeuwuil** *B scandiacus* werd voor het laatst gezien op 19 maart op Ameland, Friesland. Op 29 april werden nabij Nijmegen, Gelderland, plukresten van een

231 Roodkeelpieper / Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, De Pomp, Lauwersmeer, Friesland, 26 april 2009 *(Roef Mulder)* **232** Roodstuitzwaluw / Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*, Kraaijenbergse Plassen, Gelderland, 7 april 2009 *(Harvey van Diek)* **233** Rode Rotslijster / Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, mannetje, Veenhuizerstukken, Groningen, 1 mei 2009 *(Phil Koken)* **234** Aasgier / Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Wieringermeer, Noord-Holland, 25 april 2009 *(Fred Visscher)*

Ruigpootuil *Aegolius funereus* gevonden; de vogel bleek te zijn geslagen door een Havik *A gentilis*. Een overvliegende **Alpengierzwaluw** *Apus melba* werd op 3 april gefotografeerd bij Kamperhoek. Een spectaculaire melding was die van een helaas niet twitchbare **Huisgierzwaluw** *A affinis* op 16 maart boven Reek, Noord-Brabant. Indien aanvaard gaat het om het derde geval; de vorige waren op 17 mei 2001 op Terschelling en op 20 november 2006 in IJmuiden. De eerste **Hop** *Upupa epops* van het voorjaar werd op 15 maart gefotografeerd in Asten, Noord-Brabant. Vanaf 4 april verschenen soortgenoten op ten minste 20 andere plekken. In het merendeel van de gevallen ging het om kortstondige waarnemingen. Het meeste bekijks trok een exemplaar op de Maasvlakte van 17 tot 19 april. Vanaf 10 april werden verspreid over het land weer verscheidene **Draaihalzen** *Jynx torquilla* waargenomen. Het exemplaar dat op die datum in de Eemshaven verbleef, kreeg misschien nog wel de meeste verrekijkers op zich gericht. De **Middelste Bonte Specht** *Dendrocopos medius* van Barendrecht werd voor het laatst op 16 maart gezien. Het aantal territoria in de provincies Gelderland, Limburg, Noord-Brabant en Overijssel leek weer te zijn toegenomen.

LEEUWERIKEN TOT GORZEN Overvliegende **Kortteenleeuweriken** *Calandrella brachydactyla* werden gemeld op 15 april bij Castricum aan Zee, Noord-Holland, op 25 april bij Breskens (geluidsopname), en op 26 april bij IJmuiden. Er werden vijf doortrekkende **Kuifleeuweriken** *Galerida cristata* gemeld, namelijk op 1 maart over de Loozerheide bij Weert, Limburg, op 10 en 11 april langs Breskens en op 19 en 20 april langs Kamperhoek. Het is nog afwachten hoeveel territoria er in Noord-Brabant en Limburg worden opgetekend, maar veel kunnen het er niet zijn. Twee binnenlandse **Strandleeuweriken** *Eremophila alpestris* vlogen op 1 maart over de Loozerheide bij

235 Alpenheggenmus / Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Eibergen, Gelderland, 26 april 2009
(Martin van der Schalk)

236 Alpenheggenmus / Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Eibergen, Gelderland, 27 april 2009
(Leo J R Boon/Cursorius)

Weert. De enige andere waarnemingen in deze periode waren afkomstig uit het noorden, met name het Waddengebied. Op 20 april was er een melding van een overvliegende **Rotszwaluw** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* op het Ballooërveld, Drenthe. Pleisterende **Roodstuitzwaluwen** *Cecropis daurica* vlogen op 7 april rond boven De Kampen bij Gassel, Noord-Brabant, en op 27 april kortstondig boven De Blikken. Bovendien werden er drie doortrekkers gemeld, namelijk op 10 april langs Breskens (twee), en op 25 april langs trektelpost Lauwersmeer Kustweg. Trektelposten verspreid over het land meldden vanaf 10 april in totaal 19 overvliegende **Duinpiepers** *Anthus campestris*. **Roodkeelpiepers** *A cervinus* waren nog schaarser dan gebruikelijk in het voorjaar. De eerste vloog op 16 april over trektelpost Haarzuilens bij Vleuten, Utrecht. Daarna werden er nog minimaal zeven gemeld, waaronder een veel bezocht af en toe zingend exemplaar dat zich van 26 april tot 2 mei ophield bij Kollumerpomp, Friesland. Een mannetje **Citroenkwikstaart** *Motacilla citreola* werd op 26 april gefotografeerd bij Kamperveen, Overijssel. Een dag later verscheen een ander exemplaar in polder Hardenhoek in de Brabantse Biesbosch. Op enkele plekken werden nog **Pestvogels** *Bombycilla garrulus* waargenomen. De meeste bezoekers trok een groepje van maximaal 10 bij Oldenzaal, Overijssel, van 3 maart tot 10 april, en een eenling in Voorhout, Zuid-Holland, van 14 maart tot 7 april. De laatste meldingen waren op 19 april op de noordpunt van Texel en op 27 april in Rosmalen, Noord-Brabant. De zesde **Alpenheggenmus** *Prunella collaris* werd op 26 april ontdekt bij Eibergen, Gelderland. In de vroege ochtend van 29 april werd hij voor het laatst gezien op zijn slaapplek tegen het slaapkamerraam van de woning waar hij zich de meeste tijd had opgehouden. Op 30 april werd in het begin van de avond een mannetje **Rode Rotslijster** *Monticola saxatilis* ontdekt in de Veenhuizerstukken bij Stadskanaal, Groningen. Tot vreugde van veel vogelaars was hij ook de volgende dag nog aanwezig. **Cetti's Zangers** *Cettia cetti* lijken de winter goed te zijn doorgekomen en de populatiegroei zelfs voort te zetten. Voorlopige schattingen komen uit op c 50 zangposten in de Biesbosch, Zuid-Holland/Noord-Brabant, c 50 in de omgeving van de Grevelingen, Zeeland/Zuid-Holland, en c 15 elders in het zuidwesten van het land. In Noord-Holland werden, behalve een handvol in het Zwanenwater, ook exemplaren aangetroffen op Texel (twee) en bij de Vijfhoek bij Diemen. Ook **Graszangers** *Cisticola juncidis* kropen langzaam uit hun schulp, met meerdere zangposten langs de Westerschelde, Zeeland, en een enkeling in de noordelijke Delta, Zeeland/Zuid-Holland. Van de najaarsinvasie van **Pimpelmezen** *Cyanistes caeruleus* was ook in deze periode nog iets te merken; alleen al bij Breskens werden ruim 1250 doortrekkers geteld, uitzonderlijk in het voorjaar. Behalve op de bekende plekken in Limburg en plaatselijk elders in het oosten van het land, kon men tot ten minste 22 maart ook in Vught terecht voor een **Kortsnavelboomkruiper** *Certhia familiaris macrodactyla*. In totaal werden in deze periode zeven doortrekkende **Buidelmezen** *Remiz pendulinus* gemeld van trektelposten verspreid over het land. Het aantal territoria was moeilijk vast te stellen, ook omdat een aantal geheim wordt gehouden. Er waren nog meldingen van **Notenkrakers** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* op 29 maart bij Venray, Limburg, en op 13 april in Denekamp, Overijssel. Een langsvliegende **Huiskraai** *Corvus splendens* werd op 15 april gefotografeerd vanaf trektelpost De Vulkaan bij Den Haag, Zuid-Holland. Het betrof de eerste waarneming buiten Hoek van Holland, Zuid-Holland, sinds 18 oktober 2005, toen een exemplaar bij Renesse, Zeeland, werd gezien. Zeldzaam was het verschijnen van een **Raaf** *C corax* in en nabij het Groene Glop op Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, van 11 april tot ten minste 14 mei. Eerdere waarnemingen van dit eiland dateren van mei 1991 en april 2001. De overwinterende eerstejaars **Roze Spreeuw** *Sturnus roseus* van Den Helder werd voor het laatst op 5 maart gemeld. Het aantal **Spaanse Mussen** *Passer hispaniolensis* werd in één klap fors opgevoerd met de ontdekking van een groepje van maximaal negen, waaronder drie mannetjes op 9 april in de Eemshaven. Ze bleven tot 12 april en kregen van veel vogelaars aandacht. Solitaire mannetjes verbleven vervolgens in Den Hoorn op Texel van 17 tot 20 april en op de Maasvlakte op 20, 21, 26 en 27 april. De twee eerdere gevallen betroffen mannetjes in mei 1997 op Texel en in mei 2000 bij Camperduin. Er trokken c 40 **Europese Kanaries** *Serinus serinus* over diverse trektelposten, waarvan alleen al 23 over Breskens. Waarnemingen van zingende vogels waren zoals gebruikelijk vooral afkomstig uit Limburg. Er werden van de trektelposten in het land vijf **IJsgorzen** *Calcarius lapponicus* gemeld, waaronder een mannetje in zomerkleed op 30 april vanaf De Vulkaan bij Den Haag. Na een vroege melding van een **Ortolaan** *Emberiza hortulana* op 10 april op Schiermonnikoog, volgden in de laatste vijf dagen van april meer waarnemingen, waaronder in totaal zeven doortrekkers bij Breskens. Andere werden gezien op 26 april op Vlieland; op 28 april bij Grevenbricht, Limburg; op 28 en 29 april in de tuin van een vogelaar (en beeldend kunstenaar) in Nieuwolda, Groningen; en op 30 april bij Amerongen, Utrecht. Een **Dwerggors** *E pusilla* verbleef op 15 april enkele minuten bij trektelpost Breskens. Tot begin april verbleven nog minimaal 18 **Grauwe Gorzen** *E calandra* in het Hamsterreservaat bij Sibbe, Limburg, en een groepje van zes werd op 1 maart gemeld bij Biervliet, Zeeland. Net als vorig jaar was vanaf 13 april een zingend mannetje te bewonderen in de Vughtse Gement bij Vught. Daarnaast werden er nog ten minste negen doortrekkers gemeld, vooral bij Breskens.

Wij bedanken Kell Eradus, René van Loo, Gerard Troost, Gejo Wassink, Alex Wieland, Rik Winters en Pim Wolf voor hun hulp bij het samenstellen van dit overzicht.

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DB Actueel

Spaanse Mussen in overvloed Op donderdagavond 9 april 2009 besloot ik (Gert Jan Versteeg) nog even te gaan vogelen in de Eemshaven, Groningen, waar een dag eerder Beflijsters *Turdus torquatus* waren gesignaleerd. Op de aangegeven locatie vond ik al snel een prachtig mannetje en even later een tweede vogel. Hoewel het al begon te schemeren besloot ik nog even naar het oude vertrekpunt van de 'Borkum Line' te gaan. Er waren veel mussen maar ik besteedde er weinig aandacht aan – totdat ik ontdekte dat een aantal opvallend witte wangen had! Het waren geen Huismussen *Passer domesticus* maar ook geen Ringmussen *P montanus*. Mijn eerste associatie was Italiaanse Mus *P italiae*, die ik kende uit Italië. Ik wilde eerst wat foto's maken maar voordat ik ook maar één keer kon afdrukken verdwenen de mussen naar een ontoegankelijk bedrijventerrein. Er zat niets anders op dan te wachten in de hoop dat de vogels weer terugkwamen. Ondertussen had ik tijd om de ANWB-vogelgids erop na te slaan. Na een snelle blik was het duidelijk: geen Italiaanse maar Spaanse Mussen *P hispaniolensis*! In de commotie vergat ik in de tekst te kijken hoe zeldzaam ze waren... Na 10 min waren ze er weer en toen ze vlak bij de auto waren kon ik redelijke foto's maken van twee mannetjes. Het groepje ging wat verderop in het gras zitten en ik besloot ze te tellen. Al snel fladderden negen mussen weg, en even later een groepje van vijf, zodat ik het op 14 hield. Ik belde mijn vogelvriend Erik Pomp. Via hem kwam ik te weten dat Spaanse Mus nog maar tweemaal in Nederland was gesignaleerd, beide keren één exemplaar. Ik ging bij hem langs en nadat de foto's hem hadden overtuigd meldden we de waarneming op waarneming.nl. De voorspelbare reactie kwam snel: Marnix Jonker 'sprak' mij vanaf het scherm streng toe: 'Beste Gert Jan, één Spaanse Mus zou al heel bijzonder zijn, laat staan 14'. En op het forum van waarneming.nl begonnen de ongelovigen zich ook al te roeren. Na het plaatsen van de foto's bleek MJ te zijn bekeerd: 'Dat ziet er goed uit! Gefeliciteerd. Het kon wel eens druk worden morgen in de Eemshaven.' De volgende ochtend vond Rommert Cazemier de vogels al vroeg terug en ze zouden tot zondag 12 april blijven. Ze trokken bekijks van vele 10-tallen vogelaars die soms op de proef werden gesteld omdat de vogels zich af en toe uren niet lieten zien. Sommige waarnemers speculeerden al op een langdurig verblijf maar op 13 april bleken ze vertrokken, nadat in de loop van de voorgaande dag het aantal al geleidelijk was afgenomen. Het exacte aantal was moeilijk te bepalen omdat de herkenning van vrouwtjes erg lastig is. Vermoedelijk zijn er niet meer dan drie verschillende mannetjes gezien, alle gepaard met een vrouwtje. Het aantal vogels dat gemeld werd bedroeg maximaal negen (het aantal van 14 van de eerste avond werd snel naar beneden bijgesteld) maar zal aan de hand van het vele beeldmateriaal exact moeten worden bepaald door de Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna (CDNA).

Omdat niet eerder groepjes Spaanse Mussen rond de Noordzee waren gezien, werd over de herkomst gespeculeerd. Zo was enkele dagen voor de ontdekking in de haven een graanschip uit Griekenland aangekomen dat onderweg geen andere haven had aangedaan. Voor zover bekend zijn de vogels echter niet op of in de buurt van dat schip gezien. Verder zijn er geen aanwijzingen dat de vogels met een schip zijn meegekomen. De soort is in het verleden wel verdacht van het zich verplaatsen per schip. Zo verbleven in mei 1995 zes Spaanse Mussen te Antifer in Normandië, Frankrijk, waarvan werd verondersteld dat ze met een schip waren gearriveerd (Birding World 8: 355, 1995). Daar staat tegenover dat de soort in Zuid-Europa trekvogel is en normaliter in groepjes vliegt. De CDNA neemt vogels waarvan is aangetoond dat ze met behulp van een schip zijn aangekomen niet

237 Spaanse Mussen / Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis*, mannetjes en vrouwtjes, Eemshaven, Groningen, 10 april 2009 *(Roland Jansen)*

238 Spaanse Mus / Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, mannetje, Eemshaven, Groningen, 11 april 2009 *(Mark Schuurman)*

239 Spaanse Mus / Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, vrouwtje, Eemshaven, Groningen, 11 april 2009 *(Mark Schuurman)*

240 Spaanse Mus / Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, mannetje, Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, 21 april 2009 *(Michel Veldt)*

voor aanvaarding in aanmerking.

In de nasleep van de gebeurtenissen in de Eemshaven vond Adriaan Dijksen op 17 april een mannetje Spaanse Mus in zijn achtertuin in Den Hoorn op Texel, Noord-Holland, dat tot 20 april bleef; deze waarneming werd pas later bekend gemaakt. In de middag van 20 april vond Jaap van 't Hof een mannetje bij het begin van de Oude Stuifdijk op de Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland. Deze vogel werd dezelfde avond door enkele 10-tallen vogelaars gezien en liet zich de volgende dag gedurende iets meer dan een uur wederom bekijken. Een week later, op 26 en 27 april, volgden nog twee korte waarnemingen (beide met foto) bij de Verzinking, c 1 km van de plek waar hij werd ontdekt. Of het hier uitgezwermde exemplaren van het groepje uit de Eemshaven betrof zal wel altijd een open vraag blijven; de Texelse vogel was echter hemelsbreed op meer dan 150 km en die van de Maasvlakte zelfs op meer dan 250 km ten zuidwesten van de Eemshaven.

De waarnemingen van april 2009 betreffen – indien aanvaard – het derde tot en met vijfde geval voor Nederland, na mannetjes op Texel in mei 1997 en bij Camperduin, Noord-Holland, op 13 mei 2000. Gert Jan Versteeg

Spanish Sparrows On 9-12 April 2009, a group of up to nine Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolenis* stayed at Eemshaven, Groningen, the Netherlands. The group consisted of three males and probably six female-type birds; the precise number was difficult to establish because of identification problems with females. The location (harbour area) and the flock size provoked discussion about possible ship-assisted arrival (eg, a ship had arrived non-stop from Greece a few days before the discovery) but there was no proof linking the birds to this or any other ship. On 17-20 April, a male stayed at Den Hoorn on Texel, Noord-Holland, at more than 150 km west of Eemshaven. On 20-21 and again on 26-27 April, a male was observed at Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, at more than 250 km south-west of Eemshaven. If accepted, these are the third to fifth records; the first two were males in May 1997 and May 2000.

Aasgier kortstondig op Wieringen Zoals elk weekend deed ik (Fred Visscher) ook op zaterdag 25 april 2009 tijdens een 'rondje Wieringen' de akkers langs de

241 Spaanse Mus / Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, mannetje (midden), met Huismus / House Sparrow *P domesticus*, mannetje, en Ringmus / Eurasian Tree Sparrow *P montanus*, Den Hoorn, Texel, Noord-Holland, 18 april 2009 *(Adriaan Dijksen)*

242-243 Aasgier / Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Wieringermeer, Noord-Holland, 25 april 2009 *(Fred Visscher)*

Polderweg in Polder Waard-Nieuwland, Noord-Holland, aan. Regelmatig zijn hier rustende roofvogels aanwezig; het voormalige eiland Wieringen wordt aan drie zijden door water begrensd en daarom komen roofvogels hier naar de grond. Rond 08:30 meende ik de lokale witte Buizerd *Buteo buteo* te zien in het veld, die werd lastig gevallen door een onrustige Kievit *Vanellus vanellus*. Ik zette 'toch maar even' de telescoop erop want hij leek wat forser, ook al was de afstand erg groot. Eenmaal in beeld drong vrijwel direct tot mij door om welke soort het ging: een onmiskenbare Aasgier *Neophron percnopterus*! De adrenaline begon zijn werk te doen en ik dacht maar aan één ding: ik moet foto's hebben. Mijn apparatuur had ik snel paraat en de eerste bewijsplaatjes maakte ik van flinke afstand. Daarna ben ik iets genaderd omdat hij wel erg ver zat. Toen ik de eerste redelijke foto's had gemaakt stuurde ik een sms'je naar verschillende vogelaars in de buurt om de bijzondere vondst te melden. Ik belde ook Bob Woets die aan het tellen was bij telpost Afsluitdijk om te vragen of hij kon zorgen dat de waarneming op internet terecht kwam. Toen ik klaar was met sms'en en bellen vloog de gier een stukje op door de knal van een vogelschrikkanon… Toen hij opvloog ging hij in de richting van een aantal boeren op het land en de aanwezige Bergeenden *Tadorna tadorna* hadden hem inmiddels ook in de gaten. Hij ging desondanks toch weer zitten en ik kon wat foto's van dichterbij maken. Veel tijd was me echter niet gegund want hij steeg weer op en lastiggevallen door c 50 Bergeenden bleef hij ditmaal in de lucht. Toen hij richting de weg vloog lukte het mij om met de auto snel onder zijn vliegroute te komen en kon ik nog een aantal goede foto's maken. Helaas – in dit geval – was het inmiddels mooi weer aan het worden en op de beginnende thermiek schroefde de gier weg in noordwestelijke richting en verdween uit beeld. Enkele toegesnelde vogelaars zetten een zoekactie op touw tussen grofweg Den Helder en Den Oever maar dit leverde niks op. Rond 11:15 vloog mogelijk dezelfde Aasgier in zuidwestelijke richting over vier waarnemers in de duinen bij Castricum, Noord-Holland, hemelsbreed c 55 km ten zuiden van Wieringen; daarna ontbreekt ieder spoor… De ontdekking was een geweldige ervaring en mijn beste vondst – maar het was nog mooier geweest als anderen er ook van hadden kunnen genieten.

Het overwegend witte verenkleed met zwarte hand- en armpennen op de ondervleugel, zwarte handpennen op de bovenvleugel en lichte (naar het lichaam toe toenemende) tekening op de armpennen duidde op een (bijna) volwassen exemplaar. De vage bruine baan over het midden van de bovenvleugel en de bruine tint op de bovenstaart duidden op een niet volledig uitgekleurd exemplaar; vermoedelijk betrof het daarom een vogel in zijn vierde kalenderjaar. De vogel was ongeringd (zowel in het veld als op de foto's kunnen vaststellen). De donkere snavelpunt is op de foto's goed te zien en wees op de Palearctische en Afrikaanse nominaat *N p percnopterus*. (De ondersoort *N p ginginianus* is standvogel op het Indisch Subcontinent en heeft een geheel gele snavel; deze ondersoort is niet als dwaalgast in West-Europa te verwachten.) De waarneming van Wieringen betreft het tweede geval voor Nederland; de eerste was een exemplaar dat van 24 op 25 mei 2001 overnachtte bij Epen, Limburg, en daar op de 25 mei door enkele 10-tallen vogelaars werd gezien. FRED VISSCHER

EGYPTIAN VULTURE In the early morning of 25 April 2009, an unringed nearly adult Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* was found resting in a field on Wieringen, Noord-Holland, the Netherlands. The bird was flushed by a loud bang of a geese deterring device and disappeared in a north-westerly direction. It was seen and photographed by a single observer. Later in the morning, possibly the same bird reportedly flew south-west over four observers at Castricum, Noord-Holland, c 55 km south of Wieringen. The dark bill-tip indicates the nominate subspecies *N p percnopterus* (the resident *N p ginginianus* from the Indian Subcontinent has an all-yellow bill). It concerns the second for the Netherlands; the first was on 24-25 May 2001 near Epen, Limburg.