

First records of the Striped Crake *Porzana marginalis* in the Maltese Islands

The Striped Crake *Porzana marginalis* is native to Ethiopian Africa but its actual range is poorly known. It has been recorded from sub-Saharan savannahs to South Africa, accidental to Algeria and Libya (Cramp & Simmons 1979). There is also one unconfirmed record from Morocco (Thevenot *et al.* 2003). In Europe it has been recorded only once, an adult female at Livorno, Italy on 4 January 1997 (Brichetti & Fracasso 2004).

Two birds shot locally and hitherto unrecorded recently came to the authors' attention. The first bird identified during a re-assessment of the collections housed at the National Museum of Natural History in Mdina. This bird, a female, was shot at Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq on 29 March 1981 and is registered by the museum as NMNH/Om.1000. The measurements of the bird were as follows: bill length 17.1mm; wing 10.5mm, tail 40.5mm, tarsus 38.3mm.

The second bird, which was identified as a sub-adult female from the conditions of the plumage, was found in a private collection and was shot at Siġġiewi in April 2004. Photographs of the bird were taken and passed on to the National Rarities Committee. It should be noted that both birds were shot illegally, a practice that is a serious and widespread problem in the Maltese islands.

The two records were submitted to the National Rarities Committee and were accepted during the meeting of the 10th December 2007.

References

- Brichetti, P.A. & G. Fracasso. 2004. Ornitologia Italiana 2 Tetraonidae – Scolopacidae. Alberto Perdisa Editore, Bologna.
Cramp, S. & K.E.L. Simmons (Eds). 1979. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Vol.II. O.U.P., Oxford
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The NMNH bird on the left and the Siġġiewi bird on the right.