

UNUSUAL MOULT IN A WOOD WARBLER *PHYLLOSCOPUS SIBILATRIX*

An adult Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* caught for ringing at Xemxija on 14 September 1988 was found to have undergone a partial post-nuptial moult in its European breeding ground. The bird had moulted the following remiges: pp 3-4 and ss 6-8 as well as some greater coverts. All other tracts showed no sign of moult and as such showed a contrast between old feathers and the brighter green of the new feathers.

The bird also had an unusually short second primary which fell between pp 5-6. This could have been due to the fact that pp 3-4 were new while 2,5 and 6 were not, and as such would have undergone some wear since their last moult.

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FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF THE BLUE ROCK THRUSH *MONTICOLA SOLITARIUS*

A male Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* was noted wintering for 2 consecutive years in a disused quarry at Is-Sghajtar, l/o Naxxar. The following method of feeding was observed.

The bird perched on an exposed rock 3 to 10m above the ground, watching for suitable food items. When it spotted its prey, which in many cases consisted of insects of the order Coleoptera, it flew to the ground, grabbed the prey and carried it on a flat stone or slab of rock. There it battered the prey against the ground, then it stood back and waited, presumably to check whether the prey was dead before eating it. Sometimes it hovered momentarily before grabbing the prey.

The average size of the insects eaten was 2 to 3cm. On one occasion the bird took a large insect about 5cm long of the order Orthoptera in flight. On another occasion, the same bird was observed feeding on winged ants (probably *Messor sp.*) in a flycatcher like manner.

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RECORDS OF SKYLARK *ALAUDA ARVENSIS* SINGING IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

The Skylark *Alauda arvensis* is a very common autumn migrant but only a few manage to winter, probably due to shooting. A small return passage is often observed in spring. It had never been recorded singing in the Maltese Islands (Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society, Valletta: Malta, 1982).

On 10 February 1987, at Mgarr ix-Xini in Gozo, a Skylark was noted giving its aerial song. The bird continued singing throughout the 5 minutes that we stayed in the area. Skylarks have been recorded singing at Ghadira in February - March on a few occasions in recent years (J. Sultana & C. Gauci, pers. comm.).

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A PAIR OF SWALLOWS *HIRUNDO RUSTICA* SUSPECTED BREEDING IN JUNE 1988

At about 0800 hrs on 5 June 1988, on a country road leading from Girgenij to Zebbug (Matta), a couple of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were noted perching on an electricity wire about 15m away from the road. As these birds were rather late in their migration journey, the possibility of breeding was raised.

After a few minutes observation, the two Swallows took off and came searching for insects, flying very low, just on the road from where the authors were observing; sometimes