

Farbtypen des Trauerfliegenfänger-Männchens

R. Drost

COLOUR-CATEGORIES OF MALE PIED FLYCATCHERS IN SPRING.

Professor Rudolph Drost (~~Über das Brutkleid männlicher Trauerfliegenfänger, *Muscicapa hypoleuca*. - Der Vogelzug 6, p. 179-186, 1936~~) was the first to devote full attention to this theme. In the numerous male Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* on spring migration on Heligoland the upperparts showed considerable variation in colour. While in some males the upperpart was black throughout, others lacked black almost completely. Drost examined 237 skins from North and Central Europe, and worked out 7 colour categories for classification. At the same time he was aware of the fact that more or different categories might be chosen. However, in the meantime these 7 categories have been generally accepted and proved to be practical.

- Category I : Upperpart uniform black
- Category VII : Upperpart uniform grey or brown
- Categories II - VI : Intermediates

Examinations of northern birds show that old males belong to colour category I - IV (m 2.97) and males of the previous year to category II - VI (m 4.2). Birds (including migrants) collected in Central Europe belong to colour categories II - VII (adult, m 4.56) and I - VII (juvenile, m 5.17) respectively.

Males trapped on Malta and Gozo for ringing should be classified according to the 7 categories (see photograph). Adults and juveniles have to be separated. The white colouring of the forehead as well as the intensity of the white on the underparts may also have to be examined. There are correlations in this respect.

As generally known the difference in the colour of the upperparts have not yet led to recognize the northern and central European Pied Flycatchers as different races.

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UNUSUAL NUMBER OF EGGS IN A FAN-TAILED WARBLER'S NEST.

A nest of the Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* containing seven eggs was found at Ghajn Rihana Valley on 25th April 1984. The female was incubating the eggs. The colour of the eggs was white with reddish spots. The nest was 20cm above the ground and it was rather deep from inside.

The nest was examined again on 30th April when it still contained the seven eggs. On visiting it again on 7th May, six one-day old pulli were present. One unhatched egg was

still in the nest. The nest was examined again on 12 May and the egg, presumed infertile, was still there.

There is a possibility that the female laid her first clutch (which included only one infertile egg) earlier in the season, and then re-layed her second clutch in the same nest (this time laying six eggs which all hatched). Another possibility is that the female laid a clutch of seven eggs one of which was infertile.

A case of a Fan-tailed Warbler's nest containing eight eggs comprising two clutches had been recorded previously (Gauci, C. & Sultana, J. 1980. Instances of birds re-laying in same nest containing infertile eggs. *Il-Merill* 21 : 21).

R.G. - 'Sunview', Potters Street, B'Kara, Malta.

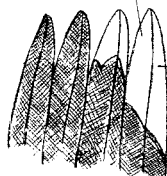
Raymond Galea

THE SECOND OCCURRENCE OF THE OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT IN MALTA.

An unusual pipit was mistnetted by the writer while bird-ringing at Xemxija on 2nd November 1983. On close examination the bird turned out to be an Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*. The identification was also confirmed separately by John Borg and Charles Gauci; the latter had also seen the first specimen which was trapped and ringed at Ghadira on 30th October 1975 (Cilia, V. 1977-78. Olive-backed Pipit - an addition to the list of the birds of Malta. *Il-Merill* 19 : 11).

In size it was smaller than a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. Its overall colour was olive-green with darker streaks on the head and very faint streaking on nape and mantle. The rump was greenish and completely unstreaked. The wings and tail had greenish edges to the feathers. The ear coverts were dark, the chin white and the throat cream. The breast was creamy white with black spots, the belly was cream and the flanks were pale fawn buff with darker streaks. The axillaries and under-tail coverts were cream tinged yellow. The broad white superciliary stripe was quite unlike that of any other European pipit.

The bill was dark grey on top and pale underneath and the inside of the mouth was greyish. The legs were pinkish and the iris dark olive brown; the eye-ring was brown. White on the outer tail feathers was present as in the accompanying figure.



The biometrics in mm. were as follows: wing 78; tail 54; tarsus 32.2; bill 15; bill depth 3.5; bill width 4.2; and hind claw 8.8. The bird weighed 20.0 gm.

While in the hand the bird called continuously a high pitched 'sip' similar to a call of the *Regulus* sp. On release its call was like a Tree Pipit's but higher pitched, a feature which was also reported by Cilia loc. cit.

This pipit is a vagrant from Asia to Europe.

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Ecs. Since the above occurrence another Olive-backed Pipit was trapped and ringed at Lunzjata, Gozo on 3rd November 1984.

SPECTACLED WARBLERS AT PLAY?

The incident reported here was observed at Ghadira Nature Reserve on 29th October 1983, at approximately 11.00 hrs. Several Spectacled Warblers *Sylvia conspicillata* were seen engaged in a social activity on the embankment which protects the south western fringe of the nature reserve. Observations were made from the road which skirts the southern border of the reserve, at a distance of from 20 to 25 metres from the birds. Powerful (16 X 50) binoculars were used.

At least three (perhaps five) Spectacled Warblers were seen chasing one another around an elevation of bare earth on the embankment. The birds followed a circular to oblong path around a ten metre stretch of embankment. At intervals, the birds perched on the bare earth to posture with cocked tail and vocalise. The behaviour was first detected by the frequent loud vocalisations produced by the interacting birds. The vocalisations consisted of snatches of song, interspersed with the churring 'alarm' call. At least two of the birds were seen carrying large (4-5 cm) green and black caterpillars in their bill. Circular chases were observed between birds which lacked caterpillars in their bill. In addition, a bird holding a caterpillar was seen being chased by another bird whose bill was empty. This behaviour was repeated at short intervals during the 10 minutes devoted to the observations. The behaviour was still in progress when observations were stopped.