

PINE BUNTING - AN ADDITION TO THE LIST OF THE BIRDS OF MALTA.

In the span of one week, two first-year male Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephala*, a species which had not been previously recorded in Malta, occurred in autumn 1982; the first at Mizleb on 31st October and the other at Bahrija on 5th November. They were taken by a shooter and a trapper respectively.

The writers were requested to identify the specimens. Both birds had white crown feathers which were partly concealed by dark brown central streaks. The cheeks were white surrounded by a chestnut mask. The chin and throat feathers were chestnut-brown with white tips. The underparts were white with the breast and flanks streaked brown. The upperparts, including the wings, were chestnut streaked black and dark brown. The chestnut rump feathers were tipped white. The tail was dark brown with the outer tail feathers having a white V pattern on the inner web. Their wing-lengths were 89 mm and 95 mm respectively.

The Pine Bunting has an eastern and central Asiatic range, which in central and western Siberia overlaps with the eastern breeding range of the Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*. Where they overlap hybridization between these two species occurs. While the Yellowhammer is mainly sedentary, the east Asiatic Pine Bunting is a migrant, wintering from Iran to China (Voous, K.H. Atlas of European Birds - 1960).

The Maltese name chosen is Durrajša Rasha Bajda.

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~~THE PECTORAL SANDPIPER - NEW RECORD TO MALTA.~~

~~The Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* is an accidental visitor from North America to Europe and N.W. Africa. In recent years it has been recorded annually in the Azores, Ireland and Britain (Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds) (1981) The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. III).~~

~~In Malta it made its first appearance on 1st May 1982 when one was sighted in the vicinity of Marsaxlokk Bay. The bird was quite tame. When it was approached closely it looked like an overgrown Dunlin *Calpina* in winter plumage and in flight it was reminiscent of a Reeve *Philomachus pugnax*. The bird, a male, was shot on the following morning when it was still in the same area.~~

~~On close examination the specimen had a white chin and a heavily mottled breast which terminates abruptly to leave a pure white belly. The under tail coverts were also white and it had some fine streaking on the flanks. A faint eye-stripe is noticeable on the slightly mottled whitish face. The crown was mottled blackish-brown but the almost similar back was a little more brownish. The wings were dark with brownish coverts and the centre of the rump black with white on both sides. The sharply pointed tail had blackish-brown central feathers with the rest being dark grey.~~

~~Measurements: Wing 134 mm; bill (to feathering) 29 mm; and tarsus 33 mm. The Maltese name chosen is Begazzina Amerikana.~~

~~Although the bird was first sighted in the afternoon one must assume that it had arrived in the morning when we had an exceptional migration of waders, turtle doves and falcons, especially Kestrels. The day had dawned with a moderate NNE wind with an overcast sky.~~

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~~MARSH HARRIERS-ROOSTING IN TREES.~~

~~The Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, like other *Circus* spp., always spends the night on the ground, often roosting communally (Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds) (1979) The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. II).~~