

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR ERRONEOUSLY RECORDED AS PIED WHEATEAR.

While showing a transparency of some stuffed and mounted birds held at the National Museum of Natural History, doubts were raised as to the proper identification of one of the specimens labelled Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* which was taken on 28 February 1974 at Marsascala.

The specimen was later made available to the authors for closer examination and was found to be definitely not a Pied Wheatear. However due to the amount of black on the throat and sides of head various sketches of the specimen were sent for other ornithologists' comments. Three were in agreement with the authors that the specimen was an adult male of the eastern race of the Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca*. One suggested *Oenanthe finschii*. However *Oenanthe finschii* has the black of the side of the neck extending and joining the black shoulders while the specimen's black is separated. One must point out however that the specimen is rather badly stuffed and mounted and due to this on one side the black of the side of the neck seems as if it is touching the shoulder.

The purpose of this short note is to correct the error which has at least appeared four times in print. The specimen is also still currently labelled as Pied Wheatear at the Natural History Museum.

It appeared as Pied Wheatear in 'Some birds accidental to Malta at the National Museum of Natural History, Mdina' - *Natural Heritage* 1:1-19 (1975) where the author, Joseph A. Vella Gaffiero wrote "A single specimen, recently acquired by the Museum, was shot at Marsascala on 28 February 1974. This specimen was until now unrecorded". It also appeared in 'A Guide to the Birds of Malta' - Sultana, J., Gauci, C. & Beaman, M. (1975) "One taken at Marsascala on 28 February 1974 (G. Fauré, pers. comm. and MOS in prep.)". It may be pointed here that G. Fauré was the collector from whom the Museum acquired the specimen. It also figured in the Systematic List for 1974 (Gauci, C. & Sultana, J. - MOS Ringing Group Report for 1974 - *Il-Merill* 16:1-26(1975)). Finally it was again reported as Pied Wheatear (under the name of Pied Chat or Pleschanka's Chat *Oenanthe leucomela leucomela*) in 'Birds of the Maltese Archipelago' (1976) by Bannerman, D.A. & Vella-Gaffiero, J.A., who stated "male shot at Marsascala (Malta) 28 Feb 1974 (Vella Gaffiero - *Natural Heritage* No.1, 1975, p.12). The latter specimen is now preserved in the Museum's collection at Mdina".

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