

First record of Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus lorenzii* (Brooks, 1880) in the Maltese Islands

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The Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus* is found in the Caucasus (*P.s.lorenzii*) and the Himalayas (*P.s.sindianus*).

On 17 November 2015 at 07.40 CET, a *Phylloscopus* type warbler was mist netted and ringed at Ghadira Nature Reserve. Upon first examination it was immediately evident that the bird was not a Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*. The face showed dark ear coverts, dark lores, a broad whitish eye stripe and brown cap (see Fig. 1). The breast and flanks were pale greyish buff with a paler chin (see Fig. 2) and lacking any yellow hues on the breast or belly, as in *P. collybita*. The bird's upperparts were of a plain brownish colour with darker wing primaries and tail (see Fig. 3) and lacking any yellowish hue as in *P. collybita* or the greenish hue on the wings as in *P. tristis*.

The bird had emarginated 4th-5th-6th primaries. Wing point 4=5. 1st primary was 8+pc; 3rd primary -1. Tail length was 45mm; bill to skull 13mm; and bill to feathers 8mm.

One of the authors (C. Gauci) had seen and photographed this species in Kazbegi (Georgia) the previous year.

The Chairman of the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC), Raymond Galea, sent photos of the bird to Lars Svensson who has extensive experience of the species. Mr Svensson had no doubt that the bird in question was indeed a Mountain Chiffchaff.

The description as well as photographs of the bird were sent to the MRRC and it was accepted on 2 February 2016 (Bonavia E. Malta Rarities and Records Committee-Malta. 2nd Report *Il-Merill* 33:40-47.) This constituted the first record of the Mountain Chiffchaff in the Maltese Islands.

References:

Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterstrom, D., 2010. *Collins Bird Guide* 2nd Edition, Harper Collins Publishers, London.

Svensson L., 1992. Identification Guide to European Passerines. P.213-216. Reprinted 2005.

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Figure 1. Overall appearance of the Mountain Chiffchaff ringed at Ghadira



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Figure 2. Greyish buff breast and flanks contrasting with pale/white belly



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Figure 3. Dark/brown upperparts and tail