

# Columns

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## Bird news

This column aims to collect a series of interesting observations and to make it accessible to the scientific community in future. We collect observations without time, space or species limitation but we focus on a limited series of category of interest. See more on Avocetta website: <http://www.avocetta.org/bird-news-column/>

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### 1. Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

**Observers:** Nunzio Grattini, Alessia Leggieri, Alessandro Berlusconi ([alessandro.berlusconi@live.it](mailto:alessandro.berlusconi@live.it))

**Category:** Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Unknown (probably not-breeding)

**Site location:** ZPS Valli di Novellara (IT4030015), Novellara (Reggio Emilia), Italy

**Date of observation:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Notes of the observers:** Observation of a female-like individual, probably a not-breeding juvenile in dispersion.

**Reasons of interest:** Unusual observation for the area; the species is considered rare and threatened in the Italian Peninsula, and does not breed in North Italy.

(Latina), Italy

**Dates of observation:** From 30<sup>th</sup> December 2019 to 08<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Notes of the observers:** Juvenile. The individual seemed to feed regularly and with success, suggesting a good overall body condition.

**Reasons of interest:** Scarce wintering species in Italy, this is the 8<sup>th</sup> record for the species in Latium.



### 2. Common Loon *Gavia immer*

**Observers:** Samuele Ramellini ([samuele.ramellini@gmail.com](mailto:samuele.ramellini@gmail.com)), Eduardo Dupré

**Category:** Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Unknown

**Site location:** Fogliano Lake, Circeo National Park

### 3. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

**Observer:** Salvatore Surdo ([salvatore.surdo@unipa.it](mailto:salvatore.surdo@unipa.it))

**Category:** Unusual number

**Number of individuals:** 19

**Status:** Migrating

**Site location:** Favignana island (Trapani), Italy

**Date of observation:** 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Notes of the observer:** Observation of 19 Black storks in migration towards Marettimo island (Tra-

pani), Italy.

**Reasons of interest:** Possibly the largest flock seen in Italy.



#### 4. Eurasian Thick-knee *Burhinus oedicnemus*

**Observers:** Daniele Ronconi, Giuliano Gerra ([giuliano.gerra@alice.it](mailto:giuliano.gerra@alice.it)), Franco Roscelli, Samuele Sereni

**Category:** Unusual breeding for location - Unusual phenology

**Number of individuals:** 4 (2 adults and 2 chicks)

**Status:** Breeding

**Site location:** Parma, Italy

**Dates of observation:** From 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020

**Notes of the observers:** A pair of Eurasian Stone-curlews nested in a small hole in the asphalt of the parking lot of Parma Fairs. The nest with two eggs was discovered by the maintenance company on 19<sup>th</sup> August and the eggs hatched between 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August. The parking lot had been closed for months due to the lockdown and some wild plants had grown around the hole.

**Reasons of interest:** The nest was built in an unusual location, on the asphalt, in a highly anthropized area. The hatching occurred unusually late, although similarly delayed breeding attempts are occasionally reported.

#### 5. Arctic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*

**Observer:** Marco Pantalone

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Migrating

**Site location:** 200 metres offshore Metauro river mouth, Fano (Pesaro-Urbino), Italy

**Date of observation:** 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**Notes of the observer:** Hunting during migratory movement. The Arctic Jaeger attacked a flock of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) flying over the sea, managing to isolate one individual. The prey, just before being attacked, made circular flights, managing to distance the aggressor more and more thanks to its greater agility, until it finally escaped. Then the Arctic Jaeger flew offshore.

**Reasons of interest:** Unusual hunting behaviour at the expense of migrating passerines.



#### 6. Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

**Observers:** Davide De Rosa, Ilaria Fozzi, Mauro Are-su, Gianluigi Caddeo

**Category:** Unusual number

**Number of individuals:** 87

**Status:** Wintering

**Site location:** North-West Sardinia (Sassari), Italy

**Date of observation:** 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020

**Reasons of interest:** This is a very large number of wintering Red Kites in comparison to the previous 40 years, when a maximum of 40 birds were estimated in the whole Sardinia.

#### 7. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

**Observer:** Marco Pantalone

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Number of individuals:** 1-2

**Status:** Breeding

**Site location:** Petriano (Pesaro-Urbino), Italy

**Dates of observation:** June-July-August 2019, July 2020

**Notes of the observer:** The individuals were observed several times hunting near some high street lamps (but never the two adults at the same time). They laid on a perch near the lamps since 20:30, waiting for them to light up and to attract numerous insects. In this way they manage not only to catch insects profusely, but to continue hunting even until 21.30, sometimes beyond the end of twilight and almost as darkness falls. Behaviour observed only in the nesting period, especially during chick-rearing.

**Reasons of interest:** Unusual behaviour of a diurnal species, observed hunting at dusk.

#### 8. Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

**Observers:** Giovanni La Grua, Salvatore Surdo (*salvatore.surdo@unipa.it*)

**Category:** Unusual breeding for location - Unusual phenology

**Number of individuals:** 4 (2 adults and 2 chicks)

**Status:** Breeding

**Site location:** Polizzi Generosa (Palermo), Italy

**Date of observation:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**Notes of the observers:** The nesting was probably successful because on the following date the presence of chicks at the nest was noted.

**Reasons of interest:** Nest built on a house, under

a balcony. Possibly one of the first cases of nesting of this species on man-made structures in an urban center.



#### 9. Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana*

**Observers:** Letizia Campioni (*letiziacampioni@hotmail.com*), Ilaria Marengo

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Actively foraging (scavenging)

**Site location:** Piornal (40°07'26.2"N 5°50'52.3"W), Valle del Jerte (Cáceres), Spain

**Dates of observation:** 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

**Notes of the observers:** A flock of about 12 individuals has been observed scavenging on fresh meat (likely cow ribs and spine) left as baits on a rocky outcrop by a photographer, whose intention was to attract and photograph griffon vultures from a hide located nearby.

**Reasons of interest:** There is a shortage of published data on the feeding habits of Azure-winged Magpie in the Iberian Peninsula. According to the current literature, in southern Spain the winter diet of adult individuals comprises of insects and a large quantities

of plant matter, reaching a volume of 41% and 50% of total biomass. Although Azure-winged Magpies are considered facultative scavengers, only one publication has reported scavenging in natural environment in the Iberian Peninsula. This observation provides additional evidence of the scavenging foraging habits of the species. As suggested by other authors, understanding the role of facultative scavengers is relevant in the context of disease transmission, especially in a tuberculosis endemic area such as the Southern part of Central Spain.

## 10. Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

**Observers:** Luca Ambrosini, Andrea Ambrosini, Roberto Ambrosini ([roberto.ambrosini@unimi.it](mailto:roberto.ambrosini@unimi.it))

**Category:** Unusual breeding for location

**Number of individuals:** Several

**Status:** Breeding

**Site location:** Alpe di Tires – Tierser Alpl (46°29'48.49"N, 11°37'58.22"E), (Bolzano), Italy

**Dates of observation:** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Notes of the observers:** On 27<sup>th</sup> August 2015 we noted four nests under the roof of the South face of the Alpe di Tires – Tierser Alpl refuge at 2440 m a.s.l. Two nests hosted nestlings and we saw adults feeding them. On 7<sup>th</sup> August 2017 we found two more nests under the roof of the East face of the refuge, one of which with nestlings. Indeed, we saw one adult feeding nestlings. However, also the other nest was probably used for nesting in 2017, as suggested by the faeces accumulated on the floor under both nests. In 2017, only nests on the East face were integer, while those on the South face were broken. In 2017, we saw old broken nests on the West face of the refuge that we did not notice in 2015. According to the refuge keeper Mrs Judith Perathoner, colonization of the Alpe di Tires – Tierser Alpl refuge occurred in 2011, concomitantly with the demolition of the Dialer hotel (about 4.4 km from the refuge at 1700 m a.s.l.), which hosted a colony. Mrs Perathoner also reported that the species nested every year at the Alpe di Tires – Tierser Alpl refuge since then.

**Reasons of interest:** One of the highest nesting sites of the species on the Alps. The altitude of this colony at the Alpe di Tires – Tierser Alpl refuge is slightly lower than that of the highest nesting of Northern House Martin reported in literature (Grossglockner, Austria, 2450 m; Ausobsky 1961). However, nesting sites at even higher altitude has been recently reported. A slight shift toward higher altitudes of bird ranges has already been documented in the Alps. Reports of birds breeding at high altitude are therefore particularly interesting for assessing the effects of climate change on bird communities.

**References** - Ausobsky A. jr, 1961. Mehlschwalbe (*Delichon urbica*) brutvogel in 2450 m seehöhe. *Egretta* 4: 51-52.



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