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This column aims to collect a series of interesting observations, collected without time, space or species limitation, focusing on a limited series of category of interest.

In this volume of *Avocetta*, you will find news items about the following species: Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*), White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), Eurasian Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedipnemos*), Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*), Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)/Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*), Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*), House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)/Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*).

Congratulations to all the dedicated observers whose contributions have enriched the content of this volume.

See more on Avocetta website: <https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/avocetta/bird-news-column>

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## 1. COMMON MERGANSER *MERGUS MERGANSER*

**Observers:** Andrea Battisti  
([andre.battisti@gmail.com](mailto:andre.battisti@gmail.com))

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

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Unknown

**Site location:** Dora Baltea River, 389 m,

“Ponte del Borgo”, Montjovet (Aosta), Italy

**Date of observation:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018

**Notes of the observers:** The bird was below the “bridge of the Borgo”, it was an immature individual with female plumage with a white eye ring.

**Reason of interest:** First observation ever for the Aosta Valley region.



## 2. WHITE STORK *CICONIA CICONIA*

**Date of observation:** 27th April 2024.

**Observers:** Agostino Brusco, Roberto Marchianò, Corrado Battisti (corrado**battisti01@gmail.com**)

**Note of the observers:** Birds landed to feed in the neighboring rice fields (included in the SPA IT9310052 “Casoni di Sibari”).

**Category:** Unusual number

**Number of individuals:** 98

**Status:** Actively migrating

**Site location:** Mouth of the Crati river (Sibari, Cosenza; ZPS “Foce del fiume Crati” – IT9310044), Italy.

**Reasons of interests:** Unusual aggregation during the spring migration. Although this species breeds in this area from about a decade, records about migration along the Ionian coastlines of Italian peninsula are still limited.



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## 3. EURASIAN STONE-CURLEW *BURHINUS OEDICNEMUS*

**Status:** Wintering and actively migrating

**Observers:** Simona Corbellini, Marco Pantalone (pantalone.marco@libero.it)

**Site location:** Fields near Trebbia river, Piacenza (PC), Emilia Romagna, Italy.

**Category:** Unusual number in wintering

**Date of observation:** November – December 2023, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Number of individuals:** 32

**Notes of the observers:** The area is near a Po River bend, where the species nests but

never wintered. Before wintering, 200 individuals roosted there. They left in mid-December, reappearing nearby on February.

**Reasons for interest:** Maximum gathering in wintering for the province of Piacenza

(PC) and one of the largest for Emilia Romagna region. Maximum pre migratory roost for the province of Piacenza.

#### 4. BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS NIGER*

**Date of observation:** 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**Observers:** Marco Pantalone (pantalone.marco@libero.it), Simone Ottorino Bai

**Notes of the observers:** The northward migration began on April 21. By April 25, 515 individuals were counted. Numbers peaked on April 28 (>200) before declining. *Chlidonias hybrida* and *Chlidonias leucopterus* were also observed.

**Category:** Unusual number

**Number of individuals:** ≥ 515

**Status:** Actively migrating

**Site location:** Fano (PU), Marches, Italy. Three points of trophic activity along the coast: 1 km south of the mouth of the Metauro river, mouth of the Metauro river and former “shooting” beach.

**Reasons for interest:** In numerical terms, unusual migratory movement for the coast of central Adriatic Italy.



**5. BARN OWL *TYTO ALBA***

**Date of observation:** 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Observers:** Alessandro Nardotto  
(alenard8@gmail.com), Cristian Bertolin

**Notes of the observers:** A barn owl was filmed by a camera trap attempting to fish in a small wetland with several cyprinids.

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Reasons for interest:** Unusual hunting behaviour for a species that typically hunts on fields.

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Status:** Unknown

**Site location:** Portegrandi (Venice), Italy



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**6. SHORT-EARED OWL *ASIO FLAMMEUS***

**Number of individuals:** 1

**Observers:** Andrea Battisti  
(andre.battisti@gmail.com)

**Status:** Dead

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

**Site location:** Rocky outcrop/hill-top clearing in a chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) wood matrix, 438 m, Donnas (Aosta), Italy

**Date of observation:** 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Notes of the observers:** The bird was identified from feathers on the ground, with chewing marks on the rachis suggesting predation or scavenging by a small to medium-sized mammal.

**Reason of interest:** The second confirmed observation of this species for the Aosta Valley region and an unusual habitat for the species in general.



## 7. PALLID HARRIER *CIRCUS MACROURUS*

**Site location:** Polesine Zibello (PR), Italy

**Observers:** Lucia Mattarozzi, Franco Roscelli, Paolo Zucca, Alessandro Pavesi (ale.pavesi18@gmail.com)

**Date of observation:** 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023-23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024

**Category:** Unusual phenology

**Number of individuals:** 1, female, first winter

**Notes of the observers:** It was observed repeatedly in an open rural area in the central Po Valley, dominated by crops (alfalfa, permanent pasture) interspersed with hedges, fallows, and farmhouses.

**Status:** Wintering

**Reasons for interest:** Pallid Harrier is an occasional wintering species in the north



of Italy. The observation reported represents the first winter record for Parma province.



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**8. MONK PARAKEET *MYIOPSITTA MONACHUS* & YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *LARUS MICHAHELLIS***

**Observer:** Gloria Sabbatini  
(gloria.sabbatini@istc.cnr.it)

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Number of individuals:** 1 adult Monk Parakeet and 2 Yellow-legged gulls (1 adult and 1 fledgling)

**Status:** Dead

**Site location:** Roof of the Museum of Zoology at Villa Borghese in Rome, Italy

**Date of observation:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Notes of the observers:** A flying gull threw the Monk Parakeet onto a roof near its fledgling. The untouched corpse remained for an hour but disappeared the next day.

**Reason for interest:** Attacks on Monk Parakeets and interactions with native species are noteworthy, given the parakeet's success as an invader in urban and agricultural areas across Europe.



## 9. ZITTING CISTICOLA *CISTICOLA JUNCIDIS*

**Observers:** Pier Luigi Beraudo  
(igiberaudo@libero.it)

**Category:** Unusual breeding location

**Number of individuals:** 7-8 (1 male, a pair and 4-5 chick)

**Status:** Breeding

**Site location:** Bene Vagienna (Cuneo), Italy

**Date of observation:** 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Notes of observers:** Confirmation of nesting, after subsequent observations since July.

**Reason of interest:** first breeding event for the specie in Cuneo Province (Piedmont, Italy)



**10. COMMON HOUSE MARTIN *DELICHON URBICUM* & BARN SWALLOW *HIRUNDO RUSTICA***

**Observers:** Carl Soulsbury (csoulsbury@lincoln.ac.uk)

**Category:** Unusual behaviour

**Number of individuals:** 4

**Status:** Nest building

**Site location:** Oulanka Field Research Station, Finland (66°22'N, 29°19'E)

**Date of observation:** 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2024

**Notes of the observers:** House Martins and Barn Swallows were observed plucking feathers and down from a dead Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) fledgling.

**Reasons for interest:** Feather collecting directly from carcasses observed for a few species. This is first observation of collecting feathers from a dead bird for House Martin and Barn Swallow.





**11. ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*****Date of observation:** 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> October 2022**Observers:** Marco Pantalone (pantalone.marco@libero.it), Francesca Passeri**Notes of the observers:** Observed for two days feeding on cleared land, located at 245 m a.s.l. and 20 km from the Adriatic Sea. It is among the most inland sightings in peninsular Italy.**Category:** Species of unusual occurrence for a given area**Number of individuals:** 1**Reasons of interest:** First observation for Marches region.**Status:** Actively migrating**Site location:** Petriano (PU), Marches, Italy.