Korta rapporter – *Short communications*

The first record of melanism in the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Första fyndet av melanism hos törnskata Lanius collurio

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An atypically plumaged Red-backed Shrike was seen on 16 May 2007 near Lipnica Wielka (Carpathians, southern Poland). The bird was melanistic. The mantle was uniformly dark-brown, while wings along with their coverts were entirely blackish-brown. The head and the neck were somewhat lighter brown, and around the eye a somewhat darker mask was marked. The bottom part of the body and the tail were in the mantle colour – dark-brown. The rump and the base of the tail were somewhat lighter brown. The outer tail feathers were clearly paler – beige, fawn or whitish – and contrasted clearly with the rest of the dark-brown tail feathers. Neither on mantle and rump nor on belly and body sides were any feather pattern (vermiculations) seen. The beak was entirely blackish, while the legs were of the normal dark-grey colour. Other traits such as size, silhouette, flight and foraging behaviour were typical for the Red-backed Shrike. The observed bird appeared to be healthy. It perched and foraged together with normally plumaged male and female Red-backed Shrike. All three birds used the same scrubs and trees for perching simultaneously and did not show any aggression. The observation was made from 7.40 to 7.50 a.m., in good weather conditions at a distance of approximately 20 meters. The possibility that the bird could have been dirty was excluded due to observed tail-feathers pattern.

Bird plumage aberrations can be restricted to a single feather, a group of feathers or may concern the entire body which changes radically the appearance of an individual bird (e.g. Short 1965, Howell et al. 1992, Clark 1998, Vittery 2005). The most striking anomalies in plumage are albinism (total or partial), resulting from the total lack of pigment production, and leucism, resulting from some other deficiency in the pigmentation process. They have been commonly recorded in many bird species (Sage 1962, Gross 1965a). A much rarer anomaly is melanism which is caused by the overdeposition of pigment (Gross 1965b). In the *Lanius* genus albinism has been recorded in Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* and both albinism and leucism in Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (Sage 1962, Stephan & Lieder 1973, Remeeus 1977). My observation is the first record of melanism in shrikes.

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Sammanfattning

En melanistisk törnskata påträffades nära Lipnica Wielka (Karpaterna, södra Polen) den 16 maj 2007. Manteln samt undersidan och stjärten var mörkbruna och vingarna med sina täckare svartbruna. Huvud och hals var något ljusare bruna och runt ögat fanns en mörk mask. Övergumpen och stjärtfjädrarnas baser var något ljusbrunare. De yttre stjärtpennorna var tydligt ljusare än de inre och kontrasterade klart mot de senare. Näbben var svart och benen normalt mörkgrå. Fågelns beteende var helt normalt och den uppträdde i sällskap med två normalt färgade törnskator. Detta är det första fyndet av melanism hos någon törnskata.

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Long handling time of a big prey – Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* foraging on frog

Lång hanteringstid för ett stort byte – trastsångare Acrocephalus arundinaceus *sväljer en groda*

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The diet of the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* includes mainly small invertebrates (insects and some spiders and snails), but also larger items like frogs of a length up to 3 cm (predominantly newly metamorphosed) and small lizards have been recorded (Leisler 1991, Cramp 1998, Bairlein 2006). The feeding techniques of the Great Reed Warbler are not as well studied as in other *Acrocephalus* species. Many of the more frequent prey items (dragonfly nymphs, aquatic beetles and their larvae, aquatic *Hemiptera*, fish fry) are presumably taken from the water surface or just beneath (Cramp 1998). Handling of larger food items like a fully developed frog has not yet been described. However, it has been reported that the closely similar Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* killed small young frogs, knocking them against the ground before swallowing (Zarudnyi 1896 after Cramp 1998).

On the afternoon of 22 August 2007, we witnessed an immature Great Reed Warbler which attacked, killed and consumed a fully developed frog *Rana* sp. in southern part of the "Druzno Lake" reserve (54°03'N, 19°27'E) in northern Poland. The incident occurred on the floating leaf of lesser bullrush *Typha angustifolia* in a small islet of lesser bullrush in a reservoir covered partially with water vegetation. We observed it with binoculars from a distance of 10 meters.

The frog was similar to the Great Reed Warbler's head in length, thus ca 4 cm (mean head-bill length ± SD of seven other immature Great Reed Warblers caught in the same place in the same period was 42.9 ± 0.71 mm, and culmen was 12.3 ± 1.05 mm). Most probably it was a Pond Frog (*Rana lessonae*; body length of adult males is 4.3–7.5 cm; Berger 2000), which occurs regularly in the reserve (Nitecki 2002). The body mass of the prey frog made up approximately 22–33% of the Warbler's body mass, based on reported mass of Pond Frog 4.5–5.0 cm length (6–9 g; Juszczyk 1987) and mean body mass ± SD of seven other immature Great Reed Warblers caught in the same place in the same period – 27.5 ± 1.70 g.

We did not observe the hunting action from the very beginning. However, our attention was drawn by the voice of the frog which had probably just been attacked and now struggled with the Warbler close to the water surface. The Great Reed Warbler was trying to seize the frog. It had difficulty maneuvering the frog into its mouth. The fifth swallowing attempt was successful. The whole handling action with the frog took at least 2 min 40 sec (from 15:48:10 to 15:50:50). After swallowing, the warbler was resting during 34 minutes (from 15:50:50 until 16:24:01). During this period, the individual was sitting on lesser bullrush leaf just above the water surface almost motionless with ruffled feathers, closed eyes and hung down wing feathers. After that it flew away.

Consuming such a big and highly caloric prey should be near the maximum momentary energy intake of Great Reed Warbler and probably compensated the time and energy expenditure of handling. On the other hand, swallowing such a big prey might have resulted in choking to death. This has been reported for e.g. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* attempting to consume European Bullhead *Cottus gobio* (Bell 1968) and Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* swallowing a Little Grebe (McCanch 2003).

Intensive and long lasting food item handling limits time available for antipredatory vigilance (Lendrem 1983, Popp 1988) and may draw attention of predators. The posture of the bird during resting after swallowing the prey (sitting just above the water surface with closed eyes and ruffed feathers) strongly suggested that this individual could have been surprised and have some trouble escaping in case of a predator's attack from air (e.g. Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*) or water (e.g. Northern Pike *Esox lucius* or American Mink *Mustela vison* – all common species in the reserve).

It is possible that frogs of such a size are not uncommon in the Great Reed Warbler diet (not reported in literature due to difficulty of observation of such behavior). The described individual was immature and inexperienced and might have not known exactly how to efficiently handle such a big prey. Experiments performed on Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* showed that handling times tended to decrease with experience, i.e. performances improved with successive replicates (Paszkowski & Moermond 1984). Alternatively, it is possible that the Warbler mistook the frog for another prey (e.g. water beetle).

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Sammanfattning

Trastsångare lever normalt på evertebrater men tar i undantagsfall också små grodor. Vi observerade en ungfågel av trastsångare som attackerade, hanterade och svalde en fullt utvecklad groda i sjön Druzno i norra Polen. Grodan var 4 cm lång och troligen en gölgroda *Rana lessonae* och detta är ett av de största kända bytena för en trastsångare (ungefär 22–23% av dess kroppsmassa). Tiden för hanteringen och sväljandet av bytet var minst 2 min 40 sekunder. Efteråt vilade sångaren i 34 minuter. Under denna tid satt den orörlig nära vattenytan med uppfluffade fjädare, slutna ögon och hängande vingar. Ett så stort byte måste vara nära det största möjliga momentana energiintaget för en trastsångare, men kompenserade förmodligen väl tids- och energiåtgången för att få ner fångsten. Å andra sidan kan följden av sådan byteshantering dra till sig predatorers uppmärksamhet och vilan efteråt utgöra en fara eftersom uppmärksamheten är nedsatt. Så vitt vi vet är detta första gången som man registrerat en trastsångare konsumera ett så stort byte.

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Tofsvipa *Vanellus vanellus* häckande på kalhygge

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus *breeding in a forest clear-cut*

DAN LUNDBERG

Tofsvipan häckar i Sverige främst i jordbruksmark och på strandängar samt på myrar och hedar (Svensson m.fl. 1999). Den är en av många jordbruksarter som minskade kraftigt i antal i Sverige 1975–1990, men på senare tid har antalen varit ganska stabila (Wretenberg m.fl. 2007, Lindström m.fl. 2008). Arten är känd för att vara polygam, det vill säga en hane kan ha en eller flera honor (Cramp 1983). En kull består oftast av tre ägg som läggs i en en-

kel bale på marken. Det är en av de vadare som är mycket lätt att särskilja könen på när de flyger på våren. Honan har en jämnbred vinge medan hanen har en mycket bredare ”hand” än ”arm”. I denna rapport beskriver jag ett fynd av tofsvipa häckande på ett kalhygge, en för arten mycket ovanlig eller möjligen helt ny häckningsbiotop.

Den 20 maj 2007 besökte jag ett kalhygge på ön Hisingen, Göteborg (57°43,60' N, 11°52,16' E). Jag observerade då en spelflygande tofsvipehane som hävdade revir och bland annat gick upp och mötte två förbiflygande hanar och en hona. Han verkade ha två honor i reviret. Grundat på min mångåriga erfarenhet av häckningsstudier av vadare på strandängar och i jordbrukslandskapet noterade jag fem–sex framskrapade bogropar av tofsvipa, dock utan ägg.

Jag återvände till platsen den 3 juni samma år. Efter tjugo minuters sökande i området där jag tidigare observerat boskrapen fann jag ett bo med 3 ägg. Ett tredje besök gjordes den 5 juni, då fotografier av boet och biotopen togs (Figur 1). När jag lämnade boet gick jag en annan väg över hygget och stötte då ytterligare en hona från marken. Den första honan, den vid boet, hade då landat på en timmerhög rakt bakom min rygg. Hannen hade alltså fått minst en hona till i sitt revir.

Jag har inte kunna finna någon publicerad uppgift om häckning av tofsvipa på kalhygge i de vanligare referensverken (Cramp 1983, Svensson m.fl. 1999, SOF 2002) och heller inte vid genomgång av ett hundratal abstracts från uppsatser jag fann genom ett sök i databasen Biological abstracts.

Från en enda tofsvipas häckning skall man naturligtvis inte dra för stora slutsatser, men i alla fall detta hygges utseende stämde väl överens med tofsvipans generella krav på en öppen och jämn biotop för häckning. Flera andra arter som vi förknippar med jordbrukslandskapet påträffas regelbundet på hyggen, t.ex. törnskata (Svensson m.fl. 1999) och ortolansparv (Ottvall m.fl. 2008). Är tofsvipan nästa art att kolonisera detta i vårt land så vanliga habitat?

Tack

Tack till Malte Andersson, Johan Wallander och Daniel Isaksson för samarbete i fält samt stöd och uppmuntran angående denna rapport, till Andreas Eriksson på Skogsstyrelsen för hjälp med kartor, samt till Tommy Järås och andra fältornitologer som delat med sig av sina erfarenheter om tofsvipans häckning.

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Figur 1. Tofsvipebo på kalhygge nära Göteborg.
Lapwing nest on clear-cut in southwest Sweden.

Figur 2. Häckningsbiotop för tofsvipa, vy från boet i Figur 1.
Breeding habitat of Lapwing, a view from the nest in Figure 1.

Summary

A Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* nest with three eggs was found on a forest clear-cut in southwest Sweden. I have found no previous records of Lapwings breeding in this habitat. Many other farmland specialists in Sweden occur also on clear-cuts, and maybe is the Lapwing the next species to colonize this typical forest habitat.

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Food-storing of slime mould in Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* during the post-breeding season

Hamstring av slemsvamp hos lavskrika Perisoreus infaustus *efter häckningssäsongen*

BORIS P. NIKOLOV & IVA P. HRISTOVA

On July 8, 2008 a pair of Siberian Jays *Perisoreus infaustus* was observed at Björnlandet National Park, which lies in southernmost Swedish Lapland. The observation took place about one km to the north of the lake Angsjön in late afternoon (17–17:30h local time). Both birds were recorded to store food items from the bright yellow plasmodium of a slime mould (video clip showing the birds' behaviour can be viewed at http://www.fotobiota.com/video_inUK.php?spec=53&clip=143). One by one, sometimes together, the jays were coming repeatedly to the moist and heavily decayed trunk lying on the ground and supporting the slime mould, filling their sublingual pouches with mould and then fixing the food items on neighbouring trees (Figure 1). The hoarded items (food boli) had the size of a chewing gum (about 2 cm long) and were fixed in concealed places, in most cases among hanging lichens (*Usnea* sp.) on side branches. The food boli were stored on trees (mostly Norway spruce *Picea abies* and birch *Betula*, but also Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*) within a radius of 10–15 m from the mould. The nearest three stored items were fixed 2–5 m away (mean 3 m), at 1.9–4.05 m above the ground (mean 3.15 m) and on Norway spruce (2.9 m high) and birches (7 and 9 m). It is evident that food items were fixed at roughly the mid-height of trees – the above-mentioned three at about 45–65.5% (mean 53.5%) of total tree height.

Before starting storing the food, both Siberian Jays were observed to chase away persistently 1–2 Redwings *Turdus iliacus*. It remains unclear whether the jays were provoked because of the fact that Redwings found the slime mould first or just because of their presence in the jays' territory.

The marked tendency in Siberian Jays to store food is well known (Cramp & Perrins 1994). This type of behaviour occurs mainly in spring, autumn and winter (Blomgren 1971, Andreev 1982, Pravosudov 1984), very rarely in summer. Most of the young are already fledged by the end of May or in early June, and a month later they usually feed independently (Cramp & Perrins 1994). Hence, the observed behaviour of food storing in July could be regarded either as supporting the young birds still inhabiting the territory or as a beginning of the intensive food storing in autumn or even as quick utilization of large but perishable food resource.

As an adaptation for living in the boreal regions in winter the Siberian Jay, as well as its close relative the Grey Jay *Perisoreus canadensis*, have sublingual salivary glands producing saliva, which is used to form food balls and to make them stick to hiding places (Bock 1961, Dow 1965, Andreev 1982, Pravosudov 1984). In contrast to the cold season, in spring the food is carried in bill and not treated with saliva (Pravosudov 1984). In our case the food boli were completely permeated by and coated with saliva, otherwise the extremely soft and fragile plasmodium of the slime mould could not be stored as well-formed food items.

In the past, the slime moulds were treated taxonomically as part of the fungi but currently they fall in another kingdom that includes the protozoans (Cavalier-Smith 2003). Although fungi ("true fungi") have been recorded in the diet of the Siberian Jay (Novikov 1952, Vorobiev 1963, Andreev 1982), no references dedicated on feeding of this bird species on slime moulds were found. However, the Gray Jay has once been reported "feeding on a large yellow plasmodium of the slime mold *Fuligo septica* in the Northern Cascades of Washington" (Sutherland & Crawford 1979). Data on the relationships between birds and slime moulds are extremely limited. It was shown that a number of ground-feeding passerine species of birds serve as distribution vectors of slime moulds (Suthers 1985).

The contribution of the present observation is towards the (1) unusual time of the year when food-

Figure 1. Siberian Jay collecting and caching slime mould. Top: One of the Jays on the decaying trunk with the slime mould. Above: Close-up of the slime mould. Left: A food bolus treated with saliva and cached in a tree.
Lavskrika som samlar och gömmer slemsvamp. Upptill: En av lavskrikorna på den murknande stammen vid slemsvampen. Ovan: Närbild av slemsvampen. Till vänster: Ett paket av slemsvamp som bearbetats med saliv och gömts uppe i ett träd.

storage in Siberian Jay took place (mid-summer) and (2) unusual food used for boli to be stored (slime mould).

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Sammanfattning

På eftermiddagen den 8 juli 2008 påträffade vi ett par lavskrikor nära Angsjön i Björnlandets nationalpark i södra Lappland. Båda fåglarna hamstrade bitar av en lysande gul slemsvamp som växte på en starkt förmultnad stock som låg på marken (Figur 1). Fåglarnas beteende kan ses på en kort video: (http://www.fotobiota.com/video_inUK.php?spec=53&clip=143). En och en eller båda tillsammans kom de gång på gång till stocken med slemsvampen och fyllde sina tungpåsar. Dessa bearbetades med hjälp av saliv till ungefär två centimeter långa paket som hängdes upp på dolda ställen i närliggande träd (gran, björk, tall). Lavskrikans hamstringsvanor är välkända, de hamstrar vanligen under vår, höst och vinter, mycket sällan på sommaren. De flesta ungar är flygga i slutet av maj eller början av juni och en månad senare skaffar de föda på egen hand. Trots detta kan det observerade beteendet kanske tolkas som att fåglarna stödutfodrade sina ungfåglar. Men kanske var det en tidig yttring av begynnande hösthamstring eller helt enkelt ett sätt att rädda en tillfällig och snabbt försvinnande födokälla. För hamstringen på hösten använder lavskrikan normalt saliv för att tillverka födobollar som kan fästas på olika gömställen. På våren sker normalt ingen sådan hamstring. De slemsvampsbollar som våra lavskrikor gjorde var dock helt indränkta av saliv, vilket var en nödvändig förutsättning för att de skulle hålla ihop och kunna fästas i trädens grenar.

Detta är första observationen av lavskrikor som samlat plasmodium av en slemsvamp, men fenomenet har en gång tidigare observerats hos den nära släktingen gråskrika *Perisoreus canadensis* i nordvästra USA.

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