

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/>

How to cite a single news: Barbera A. Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* (N. 1). In: Bazzi G. (ed.), 2019. BIRD NEWS. Avocetta 43 (2): 169. <https://doi.org/10.30456/AVO.2019207>

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1. Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Observer: Alvis Luchetta (alvis.luchetta@icloud.com)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1 male

Status: Unknown

Site location: Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio, Marcon (Venezia), Italy

Date of observation: 15th January 2023

Notes of the observer: During IWC.

Reason of interest: First record of the species for Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio since 1985.

to determine if the species will continue breeding in the area.

Reason of interest: This is the first reported breeding record of the species for Calabria.

2. Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Observer: Carlo Calabrò (carlo.naturalist@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual phenology

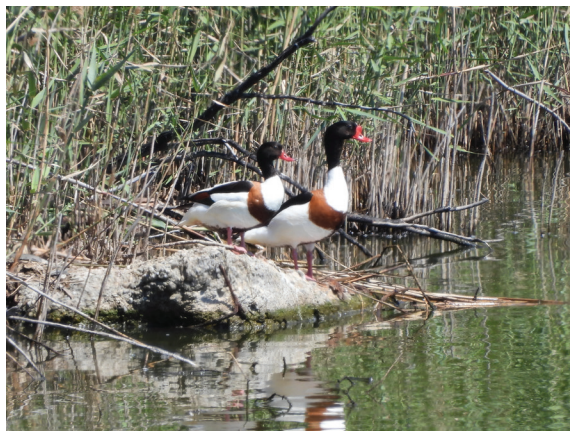
Number of individuals: 6 (a pair and 4 chicks)

Status: Breeding

Site location: ZSC IT9350143 "Saline Joniche" (Reggio Calabria), Italy (37.936175; 15.718800)

Date of observation: from 27th April 2023 to 31st May 2023

Notes of the observer: A pair of individuals has been repeatedly observed throughout the spring of 2023, on 31st May the pair was observed with 4 chicks, confirming the suspects about their reproduction. Further monitoring in the following years will be vital



3. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Observer: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding location

Number of individuals: 8 (2 adults and 6 chicks)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Pantano Ciaramiraro (Siracusa), Italy

Date of observation: 10th June 2023

Reason of interest: The species occasionally breeds in Italy but most breeding pairs are composed of individuals escaped from captivity or originating from populations naturalized in Europe. This is the first documented evidence of reproduction of a (likely) wild pair ever collected in Sicily.

4. Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Observer: Enrico Viganò (eenriviga@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding phenology

Number of individuals: 4 (1 adult and 3 chicks)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Casatenovo (Lecco), Italy

Date of observation: 7th February 2020; 26th March 2022; 14th February 2023

Notes of the observer: A chick found dead on 7th March 2020. Another chick observed on 26th March 2022, and a third, just fledged and along with an adult, on 14th February 2023.

Reason of interest: Very early breeding events.

5. Water rail *Rallus aquaticus* and Coot *Fulica atra*

Observer: Rosario Balestrieri (Rosario.Balestrieri@szn.it)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1 water rail and ca. 80 coot

Status: Wintering

Site location: Averno Lake, Pozzuoli (Napoli), Italy (40.836077, 14.078834)

Date of observation: 22nd and 26th December 2022

Notes of the observer: Both times the coots were foraged with bread near the bank. Once they took their piece of bread, they moved away from the crowd and sheltered in the reedbed, where they began to feed. The water rail, waiting in the reeds, stole their bread and then disappeared among

the reeds. Observed 4 “thefts” in 20 min on 22nd December at 9.10 and 2 “thefts” in 15 min on 26th December at 12.20.

Reason of interest: Interesting kleptoparasitic behaviour.

6. Western Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Observers: Alvise Luchetta (alvise.luchetta@icloud.com), Lucio Panzarin, Paolo Salvador, Pietro Sempredon, Matteo Di Nardo

Category: Unusual breeding location

Number of individuals: 4 (1 adults and 3 chicks)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Internal area of SPA, SAC IT3250016 “Cave di Marcon”, Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio Nord, Marcon (Venezia), Italy

Date of observation: 8th July 2023

Notes of the observers: During a bird ringing session, we observed along a path three chicks fed by an adult.

Reason of interest: First confirmed breeding event for the species in Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio Nord since 1985.

7. Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Observers: Iacopo Burattini, Marco Pantalone (pantalone.marco@libero.it)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Dead

Site location: Babbucce, Tavullia (Pesaro-Urbino), Italy

Date of observation: 31st March 2023

Notes of the observers: The individual was found dead in the center of Babbucce (5 km from the Adriatic Coast). It probably had been driven inland by the strong gale force winds (between 70 and 80 km/h) on the Adriatic Sea, reaching the mainland exhausted. Individual recovered from the Marches Wild Animal Rescue Centre.

Reason of interest: The Scopoli's Shearwater is considered regular migrant and partial wintering for

Marches region and irregular migrant and irregular wintering for the Pesaro-Urbino province; in Abruzzo region the species is a regular migrant and irregular wintering species. This is the first record of the species for inland Central Adriatic Italy.

8. African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Observers: Amos Loschi, Antonio Peruz (info@gol-milano.it)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 2

Status: Feeding

Site location: Oasi Lipu Celestina di Campagnola (Reggio Emilia), Italy

Date of observation: 18th April 2023

Notes of the observers: Two African Sacred Ibis, part of a group of five, approached a Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* nest. One of the Pied Avocets tried to drive them out, but was eventually forced to move away. One of the Ibises hit the brooding Avocet on the head, making it stand up. The Avocet attempted to deal with the attack, but while one Ibis kept it distance, the other grabbed the egg in her beak and threw it into the air, resulting in it breaking on the ground. Then, the Ibises ate the contents of the egg and then also the shell.

Reason of interest: Despite the African Sacred Ibis, an invasive alien species, is widely considered a threat for other bird species, since it could feed on their eggs and chicks, documented evidence of predation on nests in their non-native range are still scant.



9. Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Observer: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual number

Number of individuals: 50 pairs

Status: Breeding

Site location: Capo Feto and Margi Spanò ponds (Siracusa), Italy

Date of observation: between May and June 2023

Reason of interest: This is one of the highest counts for a single monitoring area in the last twenty years in Sicily for this declining species.

10. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*

Observer: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual number

Number of individuals: 11

Status: Unknown

Site location: Pantano Gariffi (Ragusa), Italy

Date of observation: 28th-30th April 2023

Reason of interest: This is the largest group ever observed in Sicily.

11. Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

Observers: Rosario Balestrieri (Rosario.Balestrieri@szn.it), Maurizio Ruggiero

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Moulting

Site location: Mouth of the San Giovanni a Teduccio sewer canal, Napoli, Italy (40.829386, 14.308850)

Date of observation: from 30th March 2023 to 26th May 2023

Notes of the observers: The individual has his left limb amputated, the lesion and age are compatible with the individual observed on 23rd October 2022 in Turin. During the period of staying, data on the moult and on the diet were collected on a weekly basis. The individual was in active moulting of flight feathers and body feathers. During the 12 days of observation, 48 foraging actions were recorded, 13 of which were on cockroaches. The others were on unidentified floating organic material. Thanks to

Vincenzo Cavaliere and Marco D'Errico for sharing the photos.

Reason of interest: Interesting documentation of the moult and diet of this migrant, irregular for Italy.



12. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

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

Category: Unusual breeding phenology

Number of individuals: 12-16

Status: Nesting and incubating

Site location: Industrial Area north of Ponte Metauro, 650 m from the Adriatic Sea, Fano (Pesaro-Urbino), Italy

Date of observation: June 2023

Notes of the observers: A little colony of 6-8 pairs of Yellow-legged Gulls, located on the roof of an industrial building (8 m high). The roof is made of sloping panels, with dividing corridors covered with gravel, where the gulls have nested. Each nest is ca. 10 m apart. The colony is 1300 m from a Recycling Center, a place used throughout the year and from many years by the gulls for trophic activity. It's probable that the colony was more extensive, also occupying the roofs of others industrial buildings in the same area.

Reason of interest: There are a few Yellow-legged Gull colonies in Marche region. The first confirmed nesting of the species in the Marche region dates back to 2006, along the coast of Conero (Ancona). In 2015 in the city of Ancona there were about 15 pairs.

13. Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Observers: Rosario Balestrieri (Rosario.Balestrieri@szn.it), Francesco Colonna

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

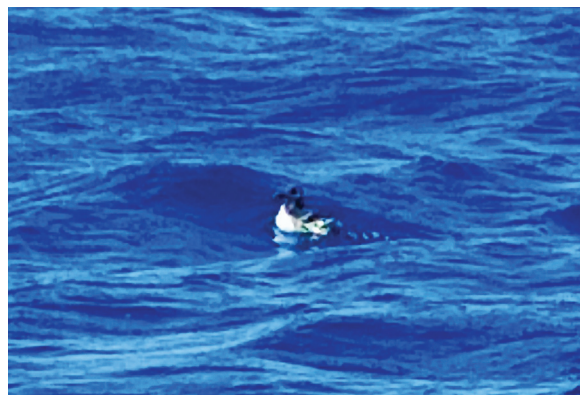
Status: Unknown

Site location: Gulf of Taranto, Italy (40.453750, 17.095583)

Date of observation: 30th July 2023

Notes of the observers: Immature individual observed, photographed and filmed with a smartphone at 8 - 10 m from the dinghy.

Reason of interest: Species rarely observed in southern Italy.



14. Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Observer: Alessandro Pavese (ale.pavese18@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Feeding

Site location: Villastrada (Mantova), Italy

Date of observation: 4th July 2023

Notes of the observer: Due to a heavy hailstorm the previous day, tens of heron nestlings have fallen from the nest and die on the ground. A debilitated (probably because of the hailstorm) Little Owl has been observed perched on a dead Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* nestling, plucking its back.

Reason of interest: It is unknown how frequent is scavenging by Owls. Very few records of scavenging by Little Owls are reported.

**15. Long-eared Owl *Asio otus***

Observers: Angela Picciau (angela.picciau@gmail.com), Marco Dragonetti

Category: Unusual breeding location

Number of individuals: 3 chicks

Status: Breeding

Site location: Isola del Giglio (Grosseto), Italy (42.360528; 10.918456)

Date of observation: 6th-8th June 2023

Notes of the observers: At least three chicks were

observed and their calls were recorded near the police station

(Via del Castello 26) of Giglio Porto. The video with the recording of chick calls can be accessed at the following link: www.birdsongs.it/public/Long_eared_owl/chickCalls_L_e_owl.html. A further observation of an adult Long-eared Owl was made in the island (42.364650; 10.915232) on the 7th May 2018, therefore at

least one pair breeds in Giglio island.

Reason of interest: The species is considered a very rare breeder in the Tuscan archipelago and this is the first

confirmed breeding for Giglio island.

16. Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Observers: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com), Angelo Scuderi, Severino Vitulano

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1 adult

Status: Unknown

Site location: Marsala (Trapani), Italy

Date of observation: 7th May 2023

Reason of interest: Regular during pre- and post-breeding migrations in Sicily, where some individuals also stop annually to spend the winter. In the vast majority of reports, these are juveniles on their first migration or dispersing immatures; very rarely, as in this case, complete adults (6th year onwards) are observed.

17. Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Observers: Alvise Luchetta (alvise.luchetta@icloud.com), Matteo Di Nardo

Category: Unusual breeding location

Number of individuals: 7 (2 adults and 5 chicks)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Internal area of SPA, SAC IT3250016 "Cave di Marcon", Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio Nord, Marcon (Venezia), Italy

Date of observation: from 23th March to 15th July 2023

Notes of the observers: During the breeding community monitoring, we observed the pair mating; we found a nest in the reedbed with 5 nestlings (drone pic taken on 27th May 2023). At the end, 3 juveniles fledged at the beginning of July (first direct observation of juvenils on 5th July). The reproductive success was 0.6.

Reason of interest: For the second consecutive year a pair of Western Marsh Harriers nested successfully in Oasi LIPU Cave Gaggio Nord.



18. Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Observers: Luigi Barraco, Salvatore Surdo (salvatore.surdo@unipa.it)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: Salt pans of Trapani, Italy

Date of observation: 15th November 2023

Notes of the observers: A young of Western Marsh Harrier, while flying over a saltpan, jumped and caught a Gilt-head Bream *Sparus aurata* of the presumed weight of a quarter of a kilogram.

Reason of interest: The presence of fish in the diet

of this species is occasionally reported in literature based on the analysis of the pellets, without any direct evidence of predation.



19. Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Observers: Francesco Ciulla, Claudio Masaracchia, Salvatore Surdo (salvatore.surdo@unipa.it)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: Lake of Paceco (Trapani), Italy

Date of observation: 21th January 2023

Notes of the observers: Observation of a common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* feeding on the remains of a cat *Felis silvestris catus* that had been hit by a car at the side of the road.

Reason of interest: This is an uncommon behaviour, and there is only one reported case in the literature.



20. Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix*

Observer: Marco Pantalone (pantalone.marco@libero.it)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Foraging

Site location: Petriano (Pesaro-Urbino), Italy

Date of observation: July 2022 and July 2023

Notes of the observer: In 2022, in a period of intense heat, an individual was observed on 3 occasions breaking a plastic bottle full of water for drinking. This behaviour has been observed again in 2023, later also performed by a Magpie *Pica pica*.

Reason of interest: Interesting observation of a Hooded Crow repeatedly using objects of anthropic origin (plastic bottles) to achieve a goal (drink). Acquisition of the observed behaviour by a Magpie.

21. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Observer: Pierandrea Brichetti (pierbrichetti@gmail.com)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Stop-over during pre-reproductive migration

Site location: Verolavecchia (Brescia), Italy

Date of observation: 23th February 2023, 18th-21st March 2023

Notes of the observer: Almost certainly the same individual observed and photographed in my garden. It should be noted that an individual was observed in a garden of Maranello (Modena) from 26th January to 21st February 2023 (G. Rossi/ornitho.it).

Reason of interest: Long stay at the same site.

**22. Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

Observer: Andrea Berardi (andreaberardi2002@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual phenology

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown, possibly wintering

Site location: Bari, Italy (41.106528; 16.865611)

Date of observation: 3rd February 2023

Notes of the observer: I observed an individual in a small green space in Bari. It was foraging on the ground and in a small Oleander bush, and allowed me to get very close to it without interrupting its foraging behaviour. The observation is interesting to me, as observations of Common Whitethroats in the winter in Italy appear to be very scarce and mostly concentrated in the last days of February and the first weeks of March.

Reason of interest: The Common Whitethroat is a normally fully-migratory species in Europe, with a very few observations in winter.

**23. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus***

Observers: Ilaria Fozzi, Daniela Casola, Federico Tossani, Erica Figus, Michele Priami, Sandro Murru, Ilaria Cossu, Maria Depratis, Jessica Papa, Danilo Pisu (danpisu@gmail.com)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1 (1 cy)

Status: Migrating

Site location: Osservatorio Faunistico del Parco

Nazionale dell'Asinara, Località Tumbarino (Sassari), Italy

Date of observation: 8th October 2023

Notes of the observers: It was caught in the mist-nets during a bird ringing project, and it was released after being ringed.

Reason of interest: This record should be the first observation of this species for Sardinia.



24. Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

Observers: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com), Angelo Scuderi

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: Marsala (Trapani), Italy

Date of observation: 22nd-23rd April 2023

Reason of interest: A regular migrant but in low numbers in Sicily, with annual reports especially at the Pelagian Islands and Pantelleria, but also on the main island. Mainly observed during the pre-breeding migration, between April and May.

25. Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Observers: Andrea Corso (zoologywp@gmail.com), Angelo Scuderi, Danilo Graffeo

Category: Unusual number - Unusual breeding location

Number of individuals: 6 pairs (*Motacilla flava feldegg*) and 4 pairs (*M. f. cinereocapilla*)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Capo Feto and Margi Spanò marshlands (Siracusa), Italy

Date of observation: between April and June 2023

Reason of interest: This is the largest reproductive population in Sicily and, as regards *M. f. feldegg*, one of the most western reproductive nuclei.

26. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Observers: Alessandro Pavesi (ale.pavesi18@gmail.com), Davide Aldi

Category: Unusual chromatic aberration

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Foraging

Site location: Soave (Mantova), Italy

Date of observation: 9th February 2019

Reason of interest: Brown individual. Brown aberration is characterized by a qualitative reduction of eumelanin (producing black, brown or grey colouration) due to incomplete synthesis of eumelanin.



27. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Observers: Gaspare Indelicato, Davide D'Amico, Salvatore Surdo (salvatore.surdo@unipa.it)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: Gorgo di Montallegro (Agrigento) Italy

Date of observation: 10th-11th June 2023

Notes of the observers: Immature male singing. The song was recorded.

Reason of interest: This species is vagrant for Sicily mainland while it is a very rare visitor for islands in autumn. Never observed in other seasons.



28. Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Observer: Emanuele Crepet (emanuele.crepet@studenti.unimi.it)

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: On a beach along the Po river ("Ponticello Beach"), Castelvetro Piacentino (Piacenza), Italy

Date of observation: 10th April 2023

Notes of the observer: The bird was calling hidden between some plants of *Xanthium orientale*. As soon as I approached to it, it flew away toward south, following the river course through bank vegetation. Sonogram made by Luca Giussani is attached, who helped me together with Alessandro Pavesi with the identification of the bird. I also thank Alessandro Gementi for the plant identification.

Reason of interest: This is the first confirmed observation of this species for the Piacenza province. In addition, the species is considered vagrant for the nearby Cremona province.

