

Columns

The 'Columns' section of *Avocetta* is dedicated to official communications on the activity of the CISO, rare-bird reports validated by the Italian Ornithological Committee (COI), updates on the status of the Italian avifauna, forums, book reviews and any other communication. Readers interested to propose new sections are invited to contact the Editorial Board.

The general purpose of the 'Columns' is to favour the communications between the CISO board and its members, with a focus on the initiatives promoted by the association itself.

<https://doi.org/10.30456/AVO.2020108>

Avocetta 44: 47-51 (2020)

Bird news

EDITED BY GAIA BAZZI¹

¹ C.R.O.S. Varenna - Via Venini 17, 23829 Varenna (LC), Italy (gaiabazzi@gmail.com)

This column aims to collect a series of unusual 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/>

**1. Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*,
Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis***

Observer: Rosario Balestrieri (ardea.rb@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1 Black-headed Gull and 1 Black-necked Grebe

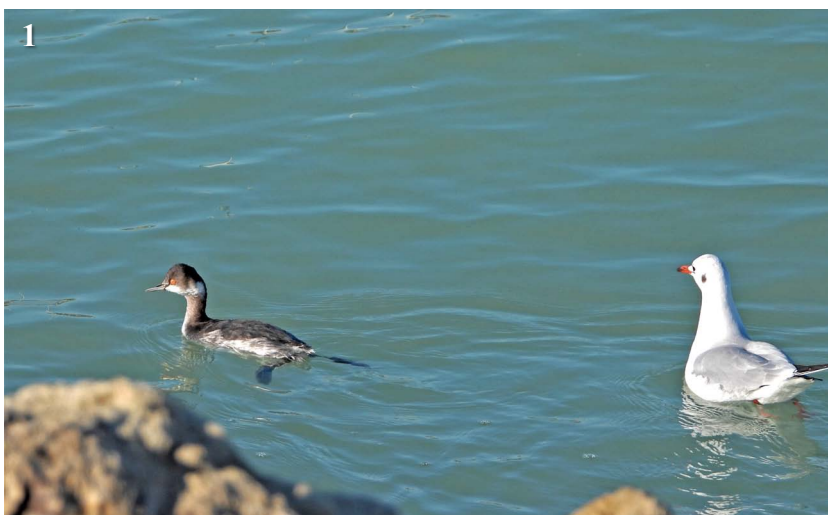
Status: Unknown

Site location: San Benedetto del Tronto Harbour (Ascoli Piceno), Italy

Date of observation: 31st December 2019

Notes of the observer: The Black-headed Gull was moving on the sea surface following a fishing Black-necked Grebe and predating on little fishes moving to the surface while escaping from the grebe.

Reasons of interest: It is well known that the Black-headed Gull is an opportunistic species which is often commensal of large sized species (e.g. cetaceans, tuna fish) predating on fish schools. However, such commensal behaviour was never observed in association with the





Black-necked Grebe. The present observation suggests that the black-headed gull may also be commensal of small sized avian species.



within an urban center. The nesting site was a concrete retaining wall in a complex of newly built houses. The site was occupied for three consecutive years.

2. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Observer: Pierandrea Bricchetti (pierbrichetti@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding for location

Number of individuals: Up to 24 adults in May and up to 11 young in July 2013, 4-6 adults in May-June 2014 and 2015

Status: Breeding

Site location: Cadignano di Verolanuova (Brescia), Italy

Dates of observation: 4 nests and 11 fledged young in 2013; 2-3 nests occupied without success in 2014 and 2015. No observations in the subsequent years.

Reasons of interest: First case of nesting in artificial holes

3. Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Observer: Rosario Balestrieri (ardea.rb@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual behaviour

Number of individuals: 1

Status: Unknown

Site location: Napoli, Italy

Date of observation: 15th December 2019

Notes of the observer: A little group of Eurasian Blue Tits was observed moving on a blooming *Strelitzia* plant. One of the birds moved on the *Sterlitzia* flower, pecking the calix, then inserted the beak in the flower and started feeding.





Reasons of interest: Though the Eurasian Blue Tit is known to opportunistically feed on nectar and to be an efficient pollinator at least for some plant species, there is no previous evidence of such foraging behaviour on *Strelitzia* flowers.

4. Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans cantillans*

Observer: Giuseppe Speranza (gisperbw@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding for location

Number of individuals: 2-3 observed individuals

Status: Breeding

Site location: Lavini di Marco (Trento), Italy

Dates of observation: 26th May 2017, 24th June 2019

Notes of the observer: The adult was seen bringing food to the nest.

Reasons of interest: These are the first known breeding records of the species for Trento Province. The breeding site is one of the northernmost for the species, and in particular for the taxon *S. cantillans cantillans*, to which the individuals were attributed by means of the analysis of call recordings (by Mattia Brambilla). The presence of singing males in this area has been recorded since 2012, with a maximum of 3 males in 2016.

5. Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Observer: Giulia Masoero (giulia.masoero@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding for location

Number of individuals: 6 (4 chicks a few days old, 1 female feeding, 1 male bringing food)

Status: Breeding

Site location: Student village, Turku, Finland

Date of observation: 2nd May 2020; on the 4th of May the nest was empty, likely predated

Notes of the observer: Nest inside the basket of an abandoned bicycle, located in bike parking lot of the inner courtyard.

Reasons of interest: Unusual nesting place in a relatively busy area and with ongoing construction works a few meters away.

6. Eastern Black-eared Wheatear

Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca

Observer: Giuseppe Speranza (gisperbw@gmail.com)

Category: Unusual breeding attempt for location

Number of individuals: 2-3 observed individuals

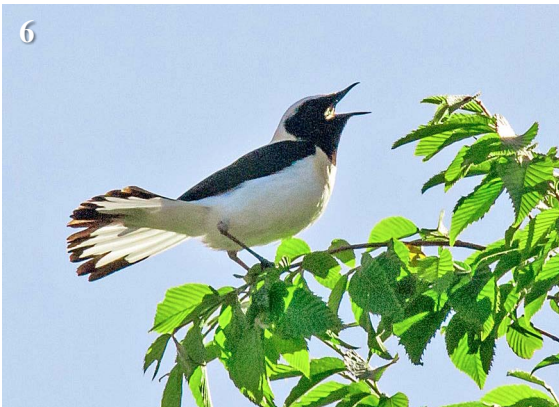
Status: Breeding attempt

Site location: Lavini di Marco (Trento), Italy

Dates of observation: From 26th May to 24th June 2019

Notes of the observer: Two black-throated singing males and one female

Reasons of interest: The species is a very rare breeder in Northern Italy. At the site the species was present with 2-3 breeding pairs until the '80s, then has never been confirmed there (and in Trento Province).



7. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Observer: Antonio Calò; compiled by: Colin Parnell and Milo Manica (*milomanica@gmail.com*)

Category: Unusual breeding for location

Number of individuals: 4

Status: Breeding

Site location: Arluno (Milano), Italy

Date of observation: 14th May 2020

Notes of the observer: Nest built on a tanker remained stationary for several weeks due to the Covid-19 lockdown. On the 14th of May 2020, the tanker returned to service, and the driver noted the presence of two chicks in the wheel arch of the vehicle. The driver returned to depot, having driven more than 300 km in the day. Once the vehicle returned to the parking area, the adults immediately started to feed the chicks. The nest was later moved to an unused vehicle, and the chicks successfully fledged.

Reasons of interest: Unusual nesting place, attributable to the Covid-19 lockdown.

8. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

Observers: Dario Di Noia, Riccardo Alba (*rickyalba26@gmail.com*), Gaia Bazzi, Giacomo Assandri

Category: Species of unusual occurrence for a given area/ Unusual phenology

Number of individuals: Avigliana: 2 (2019), 1 (2020), Pergine Valsugana: 1 (2020)

Status: wintering (both years, Avigliana), migrating (Pergine Valsugana)

Site location: Palude dei Mareschi, Avigliana (Turin), Italy; Lago Pudro, Pergine Valsugana (Trento), Italy

Dates of observation: Avigliana: from 26th February 2019 to 4th March 2019 and from 26th December 2019 to 29th February 2020; Pergine Valsugana: 8th March 2020

Notes of the observers: One individual at Avigliana was observed performing subsongs in 2019.

Reasons of interest: Very scarce and irregular wintering species in Italy. Confirmed inter-annual fidelity at the wintering site. 5th and 6th records for Piedmont and 3rd record for the Trento Province.

