

Short communications - *Brevi note***First case of wintering of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Italy**ILARIA FOZZI^{1,2}, ALBERTO FOZZI³¹Centro Studi Fauna - Via Vincenzo Monti 19, 07046 Porto Torres (SS), Italy²ARDEA - Via Ventilabro 6, 80126 Napoli, Italy; fozzi.ilaria@gmail.com³CRiMM onlus - Centro Ricerca Mammiferi Marini, 07028 Santa Teresa Gallura (OT), Italy

The Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* breeds in the Arctic regions of North America and Eurasia. It has a large global population estimated at 1,620,000 individuals in North America (Andres *et al.* 2012) and 1,100-3,400 in Europe (Birdlife International 2015). According to Snow & Perrins (1998), this species is a true migrant that travels via marine routes and has been observed migrating 80-160 km offshore. Adult females depart from the breeding grounds in early June, followed by the adult males and juveniles in late July and August, most arriving in the non-breeding quarters by the end of November. The species leaves its wintering grounds along the Chilean and South African seas in March, and West African and south-west African seas in April, flying along the Arctic coasts and re-occupying breeding grounds from late May to early June. In Europe it breeds in Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard.

Records of wintering birds, albeit very rare, have been recorded along the Atlantic coast of France (Dubois *et al.* 2008) and Spain (De Juana & Garcia 2015). Winter records in the Mediterranean Sea have been reported from Spain (De Juana & Garcia 2015), Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005), Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989) and from Malta (Sultana & Gauci 1982, Fenech 2010). In Italy it's a rare and irregular migrant; there are about 50 historic and recent valid records: 25% in March-June, 57% in August-November and 18% in December-February. The winter

observations are mostly from southern and insular regions (Brichetti & Fracasso 2004). Since 2004 there are only 4 documented winter records of Red Phalarope in Italy (Tab. 1); according to the status described before (Snow & Perrins 1998) we considered the period from the end of November to the end of April as wintering period of this species.

The first observation of Red Phalarope in Sardinia dates back to 30th December 1906 when one individual was trapped in Cagliari and stored in the Museo di Zoologia 'La Specola' of the Florence University (Moltoni 1951).

On 13th December 2014 two local birdwatchers (Franca Marras and Paolo Oppes) observed and photographed an unidentified phalarope in Stintino's salt marsh, north-western Sardinia (Sassari). It flew a little distance away, and again began to feed in the typical manner of phalaropes, spinning rapidly around stirring up bottom-dwelling invertebrates, which the bird then picked up from the surface; two days later one of us (IF) confirmed that it was a Red Phalarope (Fig. 1).

During the winter the bird was observed by many people and it was seen on 13th April for the last time. It was the first case of wintering of this species in Italy. The bird was always seen in the same pond (about 50 m to the sea coast) in the company of a flock of Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna*.

Table 1. Winter records of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Italy since 2004.

Location	Date	Number	Observers	Reference
Lago di Avigliana (TO)	2010, 21-23 Nov	1	G. Assandri	Gruppo Piemontese Studi Ornitologici, 2011
Vasto (CH)	2010, 28 Nov-1 Dec	2	S. Slade	Vavřík M. & FK ČSO, 2011
Racconigi (CN)	2012, 1 Dec	1	G. Sardi	Nicoli <i>et al.</i> 2013
Pian di Spagna (CO-SO)	2014, 25 Nov	1	G. Fontana et al.	Nicoli <i>et al.</i> in press



Figure 1. Red Phalarope wintering in Stintino (Sassari). Photo by E. Viganò.

Since 2011, the area forms part of an EU funded LIFE+ project (<http://www.sternalifestintino.eu>) to improve the conservation status of priority habitats and four species of birds, namely: Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. The project involves the acquisition of land to restore and preserve the present habitat and the construction of artificial islands for nesting birds. This area provides important nesting sites for target species considered for the project and is one of the key habitats during migration for many species of waterbirds.

Acknowledgements – F. Marras and P. Oppes who made the first observation of the Red Phalarope; D. Pisu, D. De Rosa, S. Piras, M. Sanna, F. Pireddu, E. Viganò, C. Zucca, S. Nissardi and V. Cadoni for the further observations in Stintino; P. Brichetti, A. Nicoli and G. Assandri for the information about further observations of Red Phalarope in Italy.

REFERENCES

- Andres B.A., Smith P.A., Morrison R.I.G., Gratto-Trevor C.L., Brown S.C. & Friis C.A., 2012. Population estimates of North American shorebirds. Wader Study Group Bulletin 119: 178-194.
- Nicoli A., Di Masso E. & La Grua G. (red.), 2013. EBN Italia Annuario 2012. Quad. Birdwatching 15 (12): 61-88.
- Nicoli A., Di Masso E. & La Grua G. (red.), in press. EBN Italia Annuario 2014. Quad. Birdwatching 15 (18).
- Birdlife International, 2015. European Red List of Birds. Retrieved from http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/userfiles/file/Species/erlob/summarypdfs/22693494_phalaropus_fulicarius.pdf on 12/10/2015
- Brichetti P. & Fracasso G., 2004. Ornitologia italiana. Vol. 2 - Tetrionidae-Scolopacidae. A. Perdica Ed., Bologna.
- De Juana E. & Garcia E., 2015. The Birds of the Iberian Peninsula. Christopher Helm, London.
- Dubois P.J., Le Maréchal P., Oliosio G. & Yésou P., 2008. Nouveau Inventaire des Oiseaux de France. Delachaux & Niestlé, Paris.
- Fenech N., 2010 A Complete Guide to Birds of Malta. Midsea Books, Malta.
- Goodman S.M. & Meininger P.L. (eds), 1989. Birds of Egypt. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Isenmann P., Gaultier T., El Hili A., Azafzaf H., Dlensi H. & Smart M., 2005. Oiseaux de Tunisie - Birds of Tunisia. SEOF Editions, Paris, 432 p.
- Moltoni E., 1951. La frequenza dei Falaropi (*Phalaropus*) in Italia. Riv. ital. Orn. 21: 24-28.
- Gruppo Piemontese Studi Ornitologici, 2011. Resoconto ornitologico per la Regione Piemonte-Valle d'Aosta, 2010. Riv. piemontese St. nat. 32: 297-351.
- Snow D.W. & Perrins C.M., 1998. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. 1, Non-Passerines. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Sultana J. & Gauci C., 1982. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta. Ornithological Society, Valletta.
- Vavřík, M. & FK ČSO, 2011. Rare birds in the Czech Republic in 2010. Sylvia 47: 168-169.

Associate editor: **Giancarlo Fracasso**