

Korta rapporter – *Short communications*

A mixed clutch of the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

En blandkull mellan törnskata Lanius collurio och taltrast Turdus philomelos

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On 8 June 2006 near Siedlce (E Poland) a mixed clutch of the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* was found. When this clutch was found, it was incubated by a female Red-backed Shrike, which was flushed away of a nest. In the nest there were four eggs of the Red-backed Shrike and five eggs of the Song Thrush, which were at the stage of development indicating that the incubation had begun about 3 June. During the control the clutch was not defended by any bird. The size of Red-backed Shrike eggs were: $21.6 \pm 0.22 \times 16.2 \pm 0.14$ mm, while those of the Song Thrush were: $27.3 \pm 0.46 \times 19.9 \pm 0.41$ mm. The nest was built by a Red-backed Shrike in a European elder *Sambucus nigra* at the height of 110 cm and had the following dimensions: outside diameter – 132 mm, inside diameter – 87 mm, height – 127 mm, and depth – 44 mm. The bush with the nest was situated at the edge of broadleaved woodland surrounded by meadows and pastures. During the next control on 18 June (the expected day of hatching) the clutch was found robbed. In the nest there were a few small shells of Song Thrush eggs. The brood was robbed by a mammal, probably a rodent.

Among passerines, mixed clutches have been observed most often in hole-nesters, in particular in tits *Parus* sp. and flycatchers *Ficedula* sp. (Merliä

1994, Nowakowski et al. 1997, Petrassi et al. 1998, Borgström 2005), but also for example between the Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* and the Great Tit *Parus major* (Dolenec 2002). A deficit of nesting places has been given as the reason of occurrence of such clutches. This is supported by a lack of such observations from a primeval forest abundant in holes (Nowakowski et al. 1997). However, in the described case, it seems risky to assume that this mixed clutch could be caused by the lack of suitable nesting places, as this area is very abundant in bushes and trees of various species. Probably it was the Song Thrush that started laying eggs in a still empty nest of a Red-backed Shrike. The Red-backed Shrike is sensitive to disturbance in the initial part of the incubation period and it often abandons nests (Kuźniak & Tryjanowski 1999). This was stated also in the population studied in the described area (Gołowski 2006). The Red-backed Shrike has often been a host of Cuckoo eggs (Jakober & Stauber 1980, Gorban et al. 1998). In the study area, among almost 200 nests found in 1999–2003 during incubation or feeding chicks, such a case has never been observed (pers. obs.). This might be a consequence of the ability of the Red-backed Shrike to recognise Cuckoo eggs and to remove them from a nest (Moskát & Fuisz 1999). This fact makes explanation of the described observation more complicated, because the eggs of the Song Thrush distinctly differed from the eggs of the Red-backed Shrike (in size and colour). Thus, it remains unexplained why the Red-backed Shrike accepted Song Thrush eggs, instead of abandoning the nest or removing these eggs.

References

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Sammanfattning

Den 8 juni 2006 påträffades en blandkull mellan törnskata *Lanius collurio* och taltrast *Turdus philomelos* nära Sielce i östra Polen. Kullen ruvades av en törnskatehona. I boet, som hade byggts av törnskata, fanns fyra ägg av törnskata och fem ägg av taltrast. Vid nästa bokkontroll var kullen rövad av något däggdjur. Törnskator är känsliga för störningar och överger ofta sina kullar. De känner igen gökägg och avlägsnar dem från bona. Det förblir okänt varför törnskatan accepterade taltrastäggen.

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The bird assemblage in an extensive agricultural area during the non-breeding season in central Slovenia

Fågelsamhället i ett extensivt jordbruksområde utanför häckningstiden i centrala Slovenien

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Winter bird communities of terrestrial habitats have received far less attention than breeding bird communities. From Central Europe only a few studies have been published (e.g. Luniak 1980, 1981, Luniak et al. 1986, Biadun 1994, Kujawa 1995, Saniga 1995). The communities in agricultural areas are particularly poorly known (but see Moller 1984, Tiedemann 1993, Tryjanowski 1995). In Slovenia, for example, general information about the avifauna in the winter period has been provided only by Sovinc (1994). Therefore I investigated the winter bird community of an agricultural area in Central Slovenia. I was particularly interested in how the community composition and species densities changed during the winter months and if any relationships between species existed.

Study area

The study area is located in the Lower Savinja Valley (approximately 46°16' N, 15°07' E), about three km north-west of the town Žalec at 270 m above sea level, measures 67 ha, and is protected as a nature reserve. The area belongs to the prealpine phytogeographical zone (Marinček 1987). The main land use is intensive arable farming, mainly hops (Vogrin 2002). The only exception is this study area, which is dominated by meadows and cultivated grasslands with hedges and has a low density of arable fields. The dominant tree species are *Alnus glutinosa*, *Quercus robur* and *Salix* spp. The coppice layer comprises *Corylus avellana*, *Prunus spinosa* and *Frangula* spp. About 20% of the area consists of hedges. The hedges vary in height and width, but the majority are about 8–12 m high and about 4 m wide. Almost all hedges are trimmed irregularly. Along the small river Lozniča and meliorated canals there are wider belts of unmanaged hedges, uncut for probably more than 20–30 years. The area is crossed by a power line with towers. The landscape surrounding