

Extensive post-juvenile moult in Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* in Sweden

Omfattande post-juvenil ruggning hos rörsångare Acrocephalus scirpaceus i Sverige

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On 8 October 2007, the ringers at Kvismare Bird Observatory, Martin Rydberg-Hedén, Judith Mateos and Andreas Tranderyd, were ringing at Ässön situated at 59.16N and 15.25E. An *Acrocephalus* warbler in heavy moult was trapped and it was confirmed that it was a first year Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*. A photograph was taken (Figure 1), in addition a moult card was completed. The photograph shows an extensive moult including secondaries. The moult card shows that some primaries and the tail are included in the moult.

There were however some strange patterns. The most obvious one was that the first and third to sixth secondaries were moulted while the second secondary was not moulted. In addition to this,

at least the second primary was moulted but was nearly fully grown according to the moult card. This is however not possible to see in the photograph. If the first primary also had been moulted is not possible to determine from the photographs or the moult card. In close ups on the photograph it is possible to see that the feathers on the neck and mantle consist of a mixture of juvenile feathers and newly moulted adult type feathers. There are also worn feathers in the coverts. It can also be seen that the remaining primaries and alula were of juvenile type despite the low resolution of the picture. Both wings were symmetric, including the non moulted second secondary.

The photograph also suggests that the bird was moulting very fast. The secondaries were nearly parallel in their growth. This can be recorded for birds with great time stress. An example is late moulting female Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* which complete moult in some 34 days, n=15 (Sondell 1993). Another observation, recorded on the moult card, was aberration from the normal symmetric moult pattern in the tail. It is however common with uneven moult of the tail according to the moult card archive from Kvismaren for a number of species (Jan Sondell, pers. com.).

The length of the grown flight feathers indicates



Figure 1. Photograph of the wing. Photo: Martin Rydberg Hedén.

that the moult should have started in the beginning or middle of September and would have finished in the middle of October.

I have found no definite previous record of a Reed Warbler conducting such an extensive post-juvenile moult (e.g. Jenni & Winkler). However, there are reports of adult Reed Warblers conducting complete or interrupted summer moult in Spain (Spencer & Mead 1979). All reports of extensive or more or less complete moult have been from the Mediterranean area where birds are more prone to do more extensive moult in the summer compared to northern Europe (Svensson 1992).

There are no reports of any *Acrocephalus* warbler conducting any extensive post-juvenile moult or complete moult in northern Europe prior to this finding. It seems that this bird was a rather early born Reed Warbler that started the post juvenile moult late.

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References

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Sammanfattning

Under ringmärkning för Kvismare fågelstation den 8 oktober 2007 vid Åssön, belägen vid Hjälmarén, fångades en rörsångare som ruggade vingpennorna och stjärten. Ett fotografi (Figur 1) och ett ruggkort som gjordes visade att fågeln genomgick utbredd post-juvenil ruggning.

Där fanns emellertid vissa avvikelser från normala ruggningsmönster. Det mest tydliga var att den första armpennan samt armpennorna 3–6 höll på att växa medan den andra var oruggad. Andra handpennan var ny och nästan utvuxen enligt ruggkortet. Om första handpennan hade ruggats går inte att avgöra från fotografiet. I stark förstoring går det att se på fotografiet att fjädrarna på nacke och mantel var av både juvenil och adult typ. Det syns också att de övriga handpennorna och alulan var av juvenil typ trots en dålig upplösning på bilden.

Ruggkortet visar tydligt att ruggningen skedde mycket fort eftersom armpennorna hade växt nästan parallellt, något som kan ses hos fåglar med stor tidsstress. Fjädrarnas längd tyder på att den här individen påbörjade ruggningen i mitten av september och avslutade i mitten av oktober.

Jag har inte funnit någon säker tidigare rapport om rörsångare med en så utbredd post-juvenil ruggning. Det finns enbart rapporter om utbredda eller kompletta ruggningar från Medelhavsområdet där fåglar inom samma art generellt ruggar mer komplett eller längre än i norra Europa. Det finns inga rapporter om någon *Acrocephalus*-sångare som genomfört en utbredd post-juvenil ruggning i norra Europa före detta fynd och det ser ut som att detta var en relativt tidigt född fågel som påbörjat ruggningen sent.

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