

OBSERVATIONS OF THE COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus* IN BULGARIA IN 2006 AND 2007

Opazovanja škrlatca *Carpodacus erythrinus* v Bolgariji v letih 2006 in 2007

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There has been a marked increase in the Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and a westward spread throughout its range in Europe during the past century (RISBERG & RISBERG 1975, BOZHKO 1980, HILL 1986). In Bulgaria, the species is rare, with breeding population estimated between 10 and 50 pairs (RISBERG & STJERNBERG 1997, KOSTADINOVA & GRAMATIKOV 2007). The most recent findings of the Common Rosefinch in the country are in the Rila Mountains, Razlog town, Osogovo Mountains and Stara Planina Mountains (SPIRIDONOV 1999, SHURULINKOV *et al.* 2003, STOYANOV 2005). We present several observations of the species during the breeding season over the past two years.

In June 2006 several Common Rosefinches were registered in the area of the Tuja hut (UTM LH33), Central Balkan Mountains. On 13 Jun an adult male was singing from the top of the trees and a flower stem of Mullein *Verbascum* spp., in the surroundings of the hut (1536 m a.s.l.). On 14 Jun a copulation was observed (the male in the pair was adult) on the balcony of the hut (08.00–09.00 h) (Figure 1). During the display just before the copulation, the song of the male increased markedly. On the same day, a 1st summer male (SVENSSON *et al.* 1999) was observed 1.5 km south-east of the peak Maragidik (1737 m a.s.l.). The bird was singing in a meadow covered by White Hellebore *Veratrum album* and Siberian Juniper *Juniperus sibirica*. Two birds (male and female) were



Figure 1: Courtship of a pair of Common Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* on the balcony of the hut Tuja, Central Balkan Mountains (Bulgaria). Photo: D. Ragyov

Slika 1: Gnezditveno razkazovanje škrlatca *Carpodacus erythrinus* na balkonu koče Tuja, osrednje Balkansko gorovje (Bolgarija). Foto: D. Ragyov

observed on the same day, 1.6 km east of the hut. The birds perched on the balcony of a small house along the river Tuja. On 18 Jun a singing male was heard from the top of a Beech tree *Fagus sylvatica* along the river Tuja, 0.4 km north of the waterfall Kademliysko Pruskalo (1450 m a.s.l.). The afore-mentioned observations strongly suggest that the species breeds in the area. The Common Rosefinch was previously registered in the Central Balkan Mountains only once, in the same location (near the hut Tuja) in June 1988 when an adult male was observed and heard (NANKINOV 1995).

In May and July 2007 a small group (about 5 birds) of Common Rosefinches was observed in the region of Predela (UTM FM93), at the foot of the Pirin Mountains. On 25, 26 and 27 May three adult males and a female were registered in close proximity of a hotel complex, where the habitat (at about 900 m a.s.l.) comprised of wet meadows and pastures intersected by numerous brooks and small groups of trees (mainly Black Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, but also Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Willow *Salix* sp.) with dense undergrowth (mainly young Black Alder trees and Hazel *Corylus avellana*). Males were registered to sing every day with a higher vocal rate in mornings (7.30–9.00 h) and evenings (18.00–19.20 h). When singing, males perched near the top of comparatively high trees (mainly Black Alder) but also on short trees (young Cherry Plums) and even on the fence and palings in the hotel yard (Figure 2). One of the males and the female behaved

as a pair, often feeding and flying together. On 11 and 12 Jul a total of four males were heard singing simultaneously. Males sang every morning, but in the evenings the vocal displays started later (20.00–20.20 h) than in May. An adult male was found feeding on fruits of a Wild Cherry *Prunus avium* at 11.40 h. At the end of July (on 28 and 29), males were registered to sing only in the mornings and there were no vocal displays in the evenings. The perching sites for vocal displays during this period were not the high trees, as observed in May, but mostly shrub-like young Black Alders. One of the four singing males was a 1st summer bird. In this period the Common Rosefinches were concentrated in the close proximity of a small (about 0.5 ha) artificial lake, where the vegetation comprised of sparsely located Black Alder trees with a



Figure 2: Singing male Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* in the area of Predela, Pirin Mountains (Bulgaria). Photo: D. Gradinarov

Slika 2: Pojoči samček škrlatca *Carpodacus erythrinus* v območju Predele, gorovje Pirin (Bolgarija). Foto: D. Gradinarov

thick undergrowth of young Black Alder trees. The 1st summer male was observed to defend a territory and it chased away an adult male perched near by. It is very probable that the species breeds on this locality. This is the second observation of the Common Rosefinch in Predela region, but the first (in July 1981) was carried out 26 years ago (PANNACH 1983) and since then the species was not confirmed on this locality. Our observation was made 7 km from the locality where

the breeding of Common Rosefinch was proved for the first time in Bulgaria: near Razlog town, (UTM GN03; SHURULINKOV *et al.* 2003) and at about 6 km from the locality in the surroundings of Bansko town where the species was observed during the breeding season 28 years ago (UHLIG 1981). Obviously the Common Rosefinch breeds in the area constantly but in several loose groups.

On both localities (the surroundings of Tuja hut and Predela), the species was observed in areas affected by humans and close to buildings, as has been reported for many other regions in Europe (RISBERG & STEJRNBORG 1997).

Povzetek

Avtorji podajajo nove podatke o razširjenosti škrlatca *Carpodacus erythrinus* v Bolgariji. V osrednjem delu gorovja Balkan, pri koči Tuja (UTM LH33) je bilo opaženih nekaj osebkov, ki so tam verjetno gnezдили. Opaženi so bili trije pojoči osebki ter dva para (en par pri kopulaciji). Na območju Predela ob vznožju gorovja Pirin (UTM FM93) je bila opažena v maju in juliju 2007 gnezditveno sumljiva skupina petih osebkov (štirje pojoči samčki).

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