

ORNITHOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS (2003–2007) FROM ALBANIA

Ornitološka opazovanja iz Albanije (2003–2007)

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1. Introduction

The avifauna of Albania belongs to the least surveyed among the European countries. One of the reasons is that foreign ornithologists had limited access to that country during 45 years of isolation. In the beginning of the 20th century several visits resulted in the first qualitative descriptions of Albanian avifauna, with valuable distributional data (e.g. TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932, THORPE *et al.* 1936, WHISTLER 1936). After the second World War, mainly water birds, at the most attractive sites (e.g. coastal lagoons, Shkoder Lake), were investigated by native ornithologists, who published a number of papers in Albanian (reviewed by NOWAK 1980). This author also compiled the checklist of Albanian birds supplemented with the general status of their occurrence (NOWAK 1989). Recently, the state of knowledge of breeding birds has been presented in the European Atlas (HAGEMEIJER & BLAIR 1997). The deficiency in distributional data is evident throughout most of Albania, even for the commonest passerine birds, in contrast with relatively well-studied surrounding countries.

2. Material and methods

Birds were recorded during five field trips to different parts of Albania (Figure 1) in the years 2003–2007 (spring 2004, summer 2003, 2006, 2007 and summer / autumn 2005). For species identification we used Collins Bird Guide (MULLARNEY *et al.* 2001). Taxonomic nomenclature has been updated according to recent recommendations (STAWARCZYK 2004 &

2005). For general comparison with our data we used principally the historical observations given by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932), THORPE *et al.* (1936) and WHISTLER (1936). Below, we note and comment on 89 selected bird species.

3. Observations

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Numerous on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

One on 17 Apr 2004, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One heard and seen on 17 Apr and 2 May 2004, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit; 1–2 on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; 2 on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

One on 2 Oct 2005 and 5 birds on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc. The species has been listed as rare in Europe. Recently, the Albanian breeding population has been estimated as 19 pairs, with 91–186 wintering birds (BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 2004).

Pelecanus sp.

One on 2 Oct 2005 and approx. 50 birds far from the shore on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One on 17 Apr 2004, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Several on 17 Aug 2003 and 17 Apr 2004, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit; several on 26 Apr 2004, Vrincë; several on 2 Oct 2005, near Memelisht; 50–80 birds on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; several on 9 Aug 2006, near Zagradec. Noted as breeding and fairly common in spring on Shkoder Lake by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Three adults and 5–10 in juvenile/1st-winter plumage on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; 3 on 10 Aug 2006, near Zagradec.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

One on 2 May 2004, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit; several on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec. Single pairs recorded also on Shkoder Lake by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

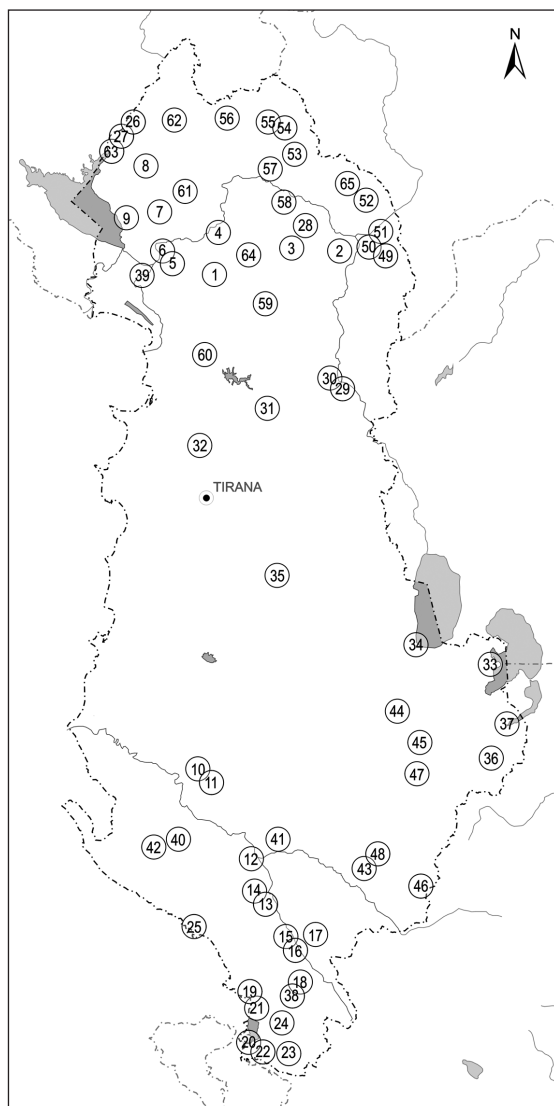


Figure 1: A map of Albania with observation sites*

Slika 1: Zemljevid Albanije z označenimi območji opazovanj*

***Sites / Območja opazovanja:** 1. Gomsiqe (Gomsiqe River valley), 2. Kolsh area, 3. Qaf Mali, 4. Koman, 5. Lac area, 6. Vau i Dejës area (Vau i Dejës reservoir shore), 7. Domen area (Kir River valley), 8. plain between Gradec and Zagore, 9. Gril, 10. Damës (Pavlit River valley), 11. Zhulaj, 12. Tepelenë area (floodplain wood of Vjosës River valley), 13. Humelice, 14. Picar, 15. Goranxi, 16. Vanister, 17. area between Libohovë and Bulo, 18. Syri i Kalter (Bistrice River valley), 19. Sarandë, 20. Butrint (area between the lake Butrint and the Jonian Sea), 21. Cuke, 22. Vrine, 23. Shkalle, 24. Kullurice, 25. Caparo (Porto Palermo Bay), 26.

Rrapsh, 27. Hot, 28. Kulumri area, 29. Rreth Kale area, 30. Hurdhe Muhur area, 31. Suç area, 32. Krujë, 33. Gollomboc (Macro Prespa Lake), 34. Memelisht (Ohrid Lake), 35. Elbasan, 36. Bilisht (a river ca 3 km W of the town), 37. Zagradec area (westernmost part of Micro Prespa Lake), 38. Bistrice (Bistrice River valley), 39. Ashte, 40. area between Velce and Ramice, 41. Mezhgoran (Vjosës River valley), 42. Gjorm (Shushicës River valley), 43. Pertran, 44. Tresove (Devoll River valley), 45. Gjonomadh (small river), 46. Leskovik and forest ca 7 km NE of the town, 47. area between Leshnje and Vithkuq (Dëshnicës River valley), 48. Benje-Novosele area, 49. Lojme area (Lumës River valley), 50. Koderlumë (rocky slopes above the Lumës valley), 51. Bardhoc i Ri (bunkers near the road), 52. Malësia e Hasit, ca 2 km N of Fshat-Krume, 53. Rreze-mali area, 54. Shoshan (Valbone River canyon), 55. between Shoshan and Dragobi (Valbone River canyon), 56. Valbone, ca 3 km behind the village, near the road to Ragam, 57. Breglumi (tunnels on the rocky slope), 58. Miliske, 59. between Reps and Mashterkor (Fani i Vogël River valley), 60. Rubik (Fanit River valley), 61. Prekal (Kir River valley), 62. Boge area, 63. Hani i Hotit (Shkoder Lake and its shore), 64. Pukë area, 65. Golaj area. The local names are based on the maps / Lokalna imena so osnovana na zemljevidih: Republika e Shqipërisë – harta administrative 1:200 000, 1999, GCC, Tirana, Albania and Albania 1:220 000, 2004, Reise Know-How Verlag, Bielefeld.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Approx. 20 birds on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint; ca 50 birds on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; singles on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec; several on 10 Aug 2007, Fanit River valley near Rubik; several on 2 May 2004 and 12 Aug 2007, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit. Once TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932) found it fairly common on Shkoder Lake and WHISTLER (1936) noted it from Butrint.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Three on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc. Once noted as a locally common breeder (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932) but THORPE *et al.* (1936) noted it as sparse and rather irregular throughout the Ohrid and Prespa lakes area. Recently, the species has been considered as extinct. In 1995 only two pairs (both without breeding success) survived in Albania where, even as a non-breeding visitor, it is now becoming very rare (PEJA AND BEGO 1999).

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Five on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc. The species is observed infrequently on passage and stays in Albania for winter (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932, NOWAK 1980).

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

One adult on 24 Apr 2004, Sarandë; 2 adults on 26 Aug 2006, between Velce and Ramice. A pair or two were observed in the same region (between Vlora and Tepelenë) and a pair recorded also from near Sarandë (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932, WHISTLER 1936). The species is in great decline throughout Europe and recently has been classified as endangered. The Albanian population is estimated as 30–60 pairs (BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 2004).

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

One subadult on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 2 on 10 Aug 2007, near Prekal.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One on 24 Apr 2004, Cuke; 2 on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; 1 on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

A female on 9 Aug 2006, near Zagradec. The species was observed there by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Single birds or pairs frequently seen at different sites. Formerly noted as widespread in wooded areas (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One on 9 Aug 2006, near Bilisht; 1 on 8 Aug 2007, Miliske.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Apparently the commonest bird of prey; single birds or pairs frequently seen at different sites. Some observations – pairs or colonies near rocky walls with cavities – may suggest breeding character, e.g. 1–2 pairs on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 2 pairs on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec; several birds on 26 Aug 2006, near Ramice. Once TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932) considered it as the most abundant and widespread of raptors and their opinion still appears actual.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 1 carrying a prey on 7 Aug 2007, near Valbone.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

One, hunting birds, on 3 Oct 2005, near Elbasan. Its status in Albania remains completely unknown. Only two recent observations were published: from Valamara Mts in SE part (1993) and from Theth area in northern mountains (1999), (BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 1999).

Rock Partridge *Alectoris graeca*

Approx. 7 birds on 19 Sep 2005, near Kulumri; 4 on 24 Sep 2005, near Hurdhe Muhur; 3 on 6 Aug 2007, Rreze-mali area; 2–3 on 8 Aug 2007, near Miliske.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

An adult with a juvenile on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; 2 on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

One heard on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Two on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Several on 17 Aug 2003, Shkoder Lake near Hani i Hotit.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Two on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; several on cliffs on 3 Aug 2007, Lojme area.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Common on summer passage when seen frequently at many sites. In spring only 3 birds on 25 Apr 2004, Butrint. Formerly recorded as numerous throughout the country (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One on 1 May 2004, Rrapsh.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

One heard on 24 Aug 2006, near Bistrice. The species appears to be rare throughout the country due to the deficiency of suitable breeding habitats (mature forests).

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

One heard on 22 Aug 2006, near Mezhgoran.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1 on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 1 on 24 Apr 2004, Cuke; 1 on 26 Apr 2004, Butrint; 1 in a bunker on 27 Aug 2006, Ashte. Noted as fairly common throughout the country by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

Scops Owl *Otus scops*

Mostly heard: 1 on 14 Aug 2003, Domen area; 1 on 18 Apr 2004, Damës; 4 birds on 19 Apr 2004 and several heard on 19–21 Aug 2006, near Tepelenë; 1 on 20 Apr 2004, Picar; 1–2 on 23 Apr 2004, Syri i Kalter; 1–2 on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; 1 on 22 Aug 2006, near Mezhgoran.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

One calling on 10 Aug 2003, Qaf Mali; 1 on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 1 on 24 Aug 2006, near Bistrice; 1 on 4 Aug 2007, ca 2 km N of Fshat-Krume; 1 on 7 Aug 2007, near Valbone; 1 on 9 Aug 2007, between Repts and Mashterkor.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Ca 15 birds on 25 Apr 2004, Butrint. The species has been listed as not recorded in Albania, but its sporadic occurrence is highly probable (NOWAK 1989).

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Numerous on passage on 18 Apr 2004, near Gril; several on 24–25 Apr 2004, Butrint; several on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; several on 6 Aug 2007, Rreze-mali area. Once migrating birds were also recorded in Butrint (WHISTLER 1936).

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One singing on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; 1 heard on 1 May 2004, Rrapsh; 1 on 9 Aug 2006, near Bilisht.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One on 12 Aug 2003, Koman; 1 on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 1 on 9 Aug 2006, near Bilisht; 1 on 11 Aug 2006, near Tresove; 1 on 19 Aug 2006, near Tepelenë; 1 on 26 Aug 2006, ca 2 km N of Gjorm.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

One on 9 Aug 2006, near Bilisht; ca 10 birds on 16 Aug 2006, near Pertran.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*

One heard on 12 Aug 2007, Boge area. Apparently a very rare and local species in Albania due to the deficiency of suitable breeding habitats – a common reason of scarcity of woodpeckers. TICEHURST &

WHISTLER (1932) quoted two former uncertain observations from northern Albania. The presence of this woodpecker in the country was definitely confirmed by WHISTLER (1936), who observed it in Logara forest (SW Albania).

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

One on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 1 heard on 11 Aug 2006, near Tresove.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

One calling and drumming on 20 Apr 2004, in a suitable breeding habitat near Tepelenë.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

One on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Apparently still common, frequently seen and heard at different sites in towns, villages and along roads (e.g. Hani i Hotit, plain between Gradec and Zagore, Vanister, between Libohovë and Bulo, Butrint). Formerly distributed throughout Albania wherever there was cultivation (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Several on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 5–10 birds with nests on cliff on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; several with nests on a rocky wall on 9 Aug 2006, near Zagradec; several in breeding habitats on 3 Aug 2007, Lojme area as well as near Koderlumë. Its occurrence near Zagradec was recorded by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Apparently common, frequently seen at different sites (e.g. Gomsiqe, Qaf Mali, Koman, Domen, plain between Gradec and Zagore, Vanister, between Libohovë and Bulo, near Bilisht, near Zagradec, near Valbone and in Prekal). Also frequently observed, from a car, along roads, in towns and villages. Its characteristic nests were often found inside bunkers and abandoned buildings. Some breeding sites: several pairs on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; several pairs building under a bridge on 26 Apr 2004, Shkalle; several pairs inside bunkers on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; 2 with a nest in a tunnel on 25 Sep 2005, near Suç; 2 with a nest in a bunker on 2 Aug 2007, Bardhoc i Ri; birds with a nest in a bunker on 3 Aug 2007, near Koderlumë; a nest in an abandoned building on 6 Aug 2007, Rreze-mali area. The species appears to be widespread and common throughout Albania, although formerly it was regarded as a very local breeding bird (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

A colony with nests on rocky wall on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec; ca 20 near an abandoned building on 8 Aug 2007, Valbone.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

One singing and 2 birds seen on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava feldegg*

Male on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; a male on 9 Aug 2006, near Bilisht.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Single birds on 6 Aug, Gomsiqe; 8 Aug, Kolsh area; 10 Aug, Qaf Mali; 15 Aug 2003, Domen area; 1 on 20 Apr 2004, ca 5 km south of Tepelenë; several males and a breeding pair on 23 Apr 2004, Syri i Kalter; 1 on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 1 on 3 Oct 2005, near Krujë; 1 on 13 Aug 2006, near Gjonmadh; single birds on 19–21 Aug 2006, near Tepelenë; 1 on 26 Aug 2006, ca 2 km N of Gjorm; several birds on 7 Aug 2007, near Valbone and Dragobi. The species appears to be widespread throughout Albania in suitable habitats along streams and small rivers.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Single birds on 6 Aug, Gomsiqe; 2 on 12 Aug, Koman; 1 on 15 Aug 2003, Domen area; 1 on 23 Apr 2004, Syri i Kalter; 1 on 22 Sep 2005, Rreth Kale area; 1 on 13 Aug 2006, near Gjonmadh; single birds on 19–21 Aug 2006, near Tepelenë; 2 on 3 Aug 2007, Lojme area; 1 on 6 Aug 2007, near Shoshan and in Valbone River canyon between Shoshan and Dragobi; 1 on 7 Aug 2007, near Valbone. Apparently widespread wherever there are mountain streams and rivers. Also noted as widespread by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Two males singing on 19 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë; 1 on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo; 1 male on 1 May 2004, Rrapsh.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

One on 3 Aug 2007, near Koderlumë; single on 8 Aug 2007, near Valbone.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Apparently common in open rocky landscapes throughout as frequently seen (e.g. near roads) at different sites. In spring 1 male and a female on 18 Apr 2004, plain between Gradec and Zagore. Once noted as common by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca*

One on 13 Aug 2003, Vau i Dejës area; a male on 18 Apr 2004, between Gradec and Zagore; a male on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; 2 males and 2–3 females on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1 male on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister. Considered as common at lower altitudes (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

One on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint; 1 male on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A pair on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo; 2 males on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint; a breeding pair on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice; 2 on 24 Sep 2005, near Hurdhe Muhur.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A female on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; 1 male on 28 Apr 2004, Caparo (Porto Palermo); 1 male and 2 females on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec; 1–2 males on 8 Aug 2007, Breglumi area. Also recorded in spring at Porto Palermo (WHISTLER 1936).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Two on 9 Aug 2006, near Zagradec.

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris*

Single birds on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint; 1 male on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

One singing on 19 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

One male on 20 Apr 2004, near Humelice; 1 male on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1 male on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 1 male on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo. Noted as one of the commonest summer visitors to Albania (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Singing male on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; 1 male on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 1 male on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

Single birds seen and heard on 11 Aug 2006, near Zagradec.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two pairs feeding young on 11 Aug 2006, near Zgradec.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Several on 22 Aug 2006, ca 5 km S of Tepelenë.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

A male on 19 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë. Noted as common throughout the country on spring passage (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

One singing and 1 male seen on 19 Apr 2004, in a suitable breeding habitat (floodplain forest) near Tepelenë. Once regarded as fairly common on spring passage (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932). NOWAK (1989) listed it as a breeding species.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Two on 20 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë; 2 males on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*

One on 20 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

Heard on 18 Aug 2006, ca 7 km NE of Leskovik; heard on 9 Aug 2007, near Pukë.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*

Heard on 18 Aug 2006, ca 7 km NE of Leskovik.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Several on 22 Aug 2006, ca 5 km S of Tepelenë.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

One on 23 Apr 2004, Syri i Kalter. Apparently much rarer in Albania, due to the deficiency of suitable breeding habitats (mature forests), than the next species. Once observed only in forests of Mamuras and Logara (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932, WHISTLER 1936).

Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer*

Single birds on 6 Aug, Gomsiqe; on 13 Aug, Vau i Dejës area; 15 Aug 2003, Domen area; several calling on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1–2 on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; several on 25 Apr 2004, Butrint; 2 on 3 Oct 2005, near Krujë; 2–3 on 8 Aug 2006, Gollomboc; common on 9–11 Aug 2006, near Zgradec; 1 on 11 Aug 2006, near Tresove; 1 on 13 Aug 2006, near Gjonmadh; 1 on 14 Aug 2006, near Leshnje; 1 on

16 Aug 2006, ca 2 km S of Benje-Novosele; single birds on 17 Aug, near Leskovik; on 19–21 Aug, near Tepelenë; on 22 Aug, near Mezhgoran; on 26 Aug 2006, near Ramice. The species appears common in suitable rocky habitats throughout Albania. Reported as very common in the limestone hills near Sarandë (WHISTLER 1936). Near Zgradec observed by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Short-Toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Several males singing on 19 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Apparently common as frequently seen at different sites (e.g. Golaj area, Gollomboc, near Bilisht, near Zgradec, between Dragobi and Valbone). Birds perching near roads were often watched also from a car. Recorded as locally abundant on spring passage by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932) and as extremely common throughout by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

A male on 19 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë; 1 on 26 Aug 2006, near Velce.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

One on 13 Aug 2003, Lac area. Noted as very abundant throughout the lower parts of the country by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Raven *Corvus corax*

Two on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1 on 18 Aug 2006, ca 7 km NE of Leskovik; 2 on 26 Aug 2006, near Ramice; 1 on 4 Aug 2007, Golaj area. Once noted as commonly seen throughout Albania (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

One carrying material for a nest on 19 Apr 2004, Damës. Noted as very common by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Several males singing on 20 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë. The scarcity of records has been pointed already by THORPE *et al.* (1936).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Heard on 22 Aug 2006, ca 5 km S of Tepelenë.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

One on 11 Aug 2006, near Zgradec.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Breeding colony (nests in abandoned buildings) on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; a male on 19 Apr 2004, Zhulaj; ca 20 birds on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; several on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; common on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo; common on 24–25 Apr 2004, near Cuke and in Butrint; common on 27 Apr 2004, Kullurice. Once regarded as a local bird (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Five on 19 Apr 2004, Damës. Formerly considered as locally common in the south of the country (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

One singing on 20 Apr 2004, near Humelice. NOWAK (1989) listed it as a breeding species.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

A male on 6 Aug 2003, Gomsiqe; pair on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; a male on 21 Apr 2004, Goranxi; 1 male on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

A male on 2 May 2004, near Hot.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Frequently heard and seen at different sites in Apr 2004, e.g. 1 on 19 Apr 2004, Damës; 1 on 20 Apr 2004, near Tepelenë and near Humelice; 1 on 22 Apr 2004, Vanister; 1 on 23 Apr 2004, between Libohovë and Bulo; 1 on 24 Apr 2004, Butrint. Formerly noted as common in valleys and plains throughout the country (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932).

4. Discussion

According to our observations the characteristic common birds of the Albanian countryside are: Kestrel, Crested Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Wheatear, Rock Nuthatch and Red-backed Shrike. Most of them are typical for open farmland and anthropogenic areas and for the open hilly and rocky habitats that dominate the country. Some of them were noted as common birds 70 years ago (TICEHURST & WHISTLER 1932, THORPE *et al.* 1936, WHISTLER 1936). Since then, Red-rumped Swallow has also become common and apparently extended its range.

Several species appear to be very rare and local in Albania and doubtless they have been considered as such in Europe (HAGEMEIJER & BLAIR 1997): Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Egyptian Vulture, Lanner

Falcon and Moustached Warbler. Others appear to be uncommon and scarce breeders throughout the country and their observation may be notable: Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Stone Curlew, Eagle Owl, Collared Flycatcher and probably also Rock Sparrow. Pallid Swift should be seen at least on passage, but its status in Albania needs elucidation.

There is an interesting group of birds associated with mature forests, e.g. Tawny Owl, Black Woodpecker and Nuthatch, which appear to be rare and patchily distributed due to the scarcity of suitable breeding sites. Huge extents of deforestation, accounting for the situation, have been noted by TICEHURST & WHISTLER (1932) and are still actual. The largest concentration of probably breeding woodland birds was recorded in the floodplain forest in Vjosës River valley, south of Tepelenë. The forest, marked with several brooks, consists mainly of mature *Platanus orientalis* and *Populus* sp. trees. It appears to be a suitable habitat for e.g. Scops Owl, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Whitethroat, Pied Flycatcher, Collared Flycatcher, Short-Toed Treecreeper and Chaffinch i.e. mostly species rarely encountered in Albania.

In the Balkans, there are large distributional gaps for many bird species in Albania (HAGEMEIJER & BLAIR 1997). Doubtless, in many cases the data deficiency is a result of the absence or insufficiency of field studies. For some species (e.g. Rock Nuthatch) we can confirm much wider and commoner occurrence, throughout the country, than was thought previously.

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5. Povzetek

Avtorji podajajo rezultate priložnostnih popisov ptic v Albaniji v letih 2003–2007 (pomlad 2004, poletje 2003, 2006, 2007 and poletje/jesen 2005). Ornitoloških podatkov iz Albanije je zelo malo, za nekatere v okolici običajne vrste, za Albanijo manjkajo. Zabeležili so zelo malo podatkov o gozdnih vrstah, ker je habitat izkrčen, razen na nekaterih redkih območjih (dolina reke Vjosës). Nekatere vrste so glede na popise v prvi polovici prejšnjega stoletja razširile svoj areal, denimo rdeča lastovka *Cecropis daurica*.

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