

## NEW BIRD SPECIES BREEDING IN RETEZAT MOUNTAINS

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### Rezumat

#### Specii noi de păsări cuibăritoare în Munții Retezat

In anul 2000 s-au organizat noi cercetări ornitologice în Parcul Național Retezat, cu prilejul inventarierii de bază a florei și a faunei. S-a constatat cuibăritul la patru specii noi în Munții Retezat – cârstelul de câmp, ciocârlia urecheată, lăstunul de stâncă și mugurarul roșu, respectiv rândunica roșcată care a fost găsită în apropierea Parcului. Cu acest prilej s-a făcut și o prezentare mai detaliată a speciilor nominate, referitor la situația lor, pe plan european cât și cel din România.

The Retezat Mountains lay on the south-western part of Romania, taking part from the Southern Carpathians (or Transylvanian Alps), being on of the ornithologically most well known part of the country. From the second half of the XIX century, many ornithologists, native and strangers as well organised trips to the area. The first descriptions of the avifauna in the area comes from CSATÓ (1869, 1873, 1885), after whom Danford (DANFORD & BROWN 1875), CONGRAVE (CONGRAVE 1929, 1935) and MUNTEANU (1985, 1986, 1987, 1992) gave valuable informations.

Csató was the first ornithologist who made systematical observations in the region, he presenting a synopsis of fauna and flora of the area. He used some notes from the late Stetter's collection as well. Many of the bird species found by him were confirmed lately by others. Danford spent several years in the Retezat area, but travelled in the whole Transylvania. In his coauthored monograph (DANFORD & BROWN 1875) we may find several notes on Retezat. Congrave in his two papers made a detailed presentation of the bird fauna, mentioning 116 species. Munteanu presents information mainly from the boreal-alpine region, in his papers we found detailed information about the density and abundance of breeding birds from conifer forests, dwarf pine regions and alpine zones. He mentioned 87 species. We may find several notes on new species observed in Retezat in GHIRA & NUȚU (1986), GÎRLEA (1977), DUNĂREANU (1956) and others.

The aim of this short note is to present some information regarding new breeding bird species in Retezat, records from the year 2000. The observations were made by volunteers of an ecological base-line survey organised by the Retezat National Park Management Authority, between

20.05. - 29.08.2000. In some areas we looked for the species mentioned, other observations were made by chance. Below I will present the occurrence of the observed species, with details on their country-wide situation.

1. Corncrake (*Crex crex*). The species was observed in the core area of the National Park, near Gura Zlata, in the Lănciți Valley, 1150 m a.s.l., on 23-25.05. and 29.06.2000. In the first occasion one singing male was noted, in the second time there were two singing males. The area is a small pastureland (5-6 ha) surrounded by beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and poplar (*Betula pendula*) forested stands. The birds were noted in a small patch of *Urtica dioica*, near an abandoned sheepkeeper's hut.

The species is a common breeding bird of wet meadows all over the country, reaching high densities in intramontane basins. The Romanian population is estimated 6000 singing males, according to WEBER (1994).

2. Shore Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). The species was observed for the first time in the Râu Mare Valley, near Râu de Mori village, on 15.03.2000, when a pair was present, with the male intensively singing. The birds were present in the same area on 22.03., but not found after that date. The first record of breeding was noted on 26.05.2000 when a hardly flying chick was found in the southern slope of Păpușa Peak, on a scree slope with alpine vegetation. The bird behaved specifically, laying on the ground relying on the ground relying on its mimicry plumage. It was flushed several times in our efforts to capture. The parents not were seen only heard, and the late afternoon timing prevented us from more searches.

The species is a very rare breeding bird of the Southern Carpathians, the only proved breeding from the last three decades comes from Cindrel area. Northern populations of the species (of subspecies *flava*) occur regularly as winter visitors. The estimated breeding population of the species in the country is 30 breeding pairs (WEBER 1994).

3. Crag Martin (*Pytyonoprogne rupestris*). It was first observed in the Râu Mare Valley, at the Gura Apei dam, on 26.05. 2000. A flock of 62 individuals were seen several times on that day. The first nest was discovered on the same date, attached to a near-vertical rock, with a small shelter, above a commonly used road (three nestlings were reared, they left the nest on 29.07). Two more nests were found, all in the Râu Mare Valley, about 400m and 2000m far from the first one. Birds were seen several times after that date, last observation dated from 15. 09. 2000, near the locality Râu de Mori, when 6 birds were seen.

The crag martin is a species in expansion all over its breeding area. The first record of its breeding was proven in late sixties, after that several new breeding areas were found. The closest breeding place to the Retezat Mountains is the Cerna Valley, where several colonies are present (SÁNDOR & PETROVICI 1996). The estimated breeding population of the species in the country is 300 pairs according to WEBER (1994).

4. Red-rumped Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). The species was not observed in the Retezat National Park, but in the very vicinity of its, at about 2 km far from the southern slopes of the Limestone Retezat, and its future breeding in the park is highly probable. Two birds were observed several times (27.05, 29.05, 20.06, 05.07, 19.08) at the Crivadia Gorge. No nest were found, although breeding was suspected.

The species it is in overall expansion, first mentioned in the country by RADU (1977) in 1976, its breeding was confirmed by PASPALEVA (1977) for Southern Dobrogea, and ultimately found in the western part of the country as well (SÁNDOR & PETROVICI 1996). The estimated breeding population of the species in the country is 40 pairs (WEBER 1994).

5. Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*). First occurrence of the species in the Retezat Mountains were noted by KOHL & SASVÁRI (1980) in 1977, a singing male near Cârnic, northern part of the Retezat. Although surveyed several times after that record, no new observation was made in the area. A new breeding population was discovered in 2000, consisting of about 26-33 breeding pairs in the southwestern part of the National Park, in the area Gura Apei - Rotunda. The first birds were observed on 26.05.2000, several singing males in the area of Gura Apei (aprox. 1,100 m a.s.l.), near human habitations. The area is covered by young exemplars of larch (*Larix decidua*), willow (*Salix sp.*) and poplar trees. Late in the season a survey in the area noted 26 singing males. In addition 6-7 singing males were found along the Lăpușnicu Mare Valley. The birds were present until middle of August (last individual - a juvenile - seen on 16.08.2000).

The species is expanding its range from east to west, first bred in the country in 1976 in Upper Mureș Valley (KOHL & SASVÁRI 1980). The Retezat is it's second proven breeding area and there are signs that in near future will expand its area in other parts of the country as well. The estimated breeding population of the species in the country is 300 pairs, according to SÁNDOR (in prep.).

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