

New species in the Hungarian avifauna in 2014

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Abstract Two new species appeared in the Hungarian avifauna in 2014: the Spanish Sparrow and the Blyth's Reed Warbler. One pair of Spanish Sparrow was breeding in Bácsborsód between June 13th and July 31st in the side of a stork nest. The Blyth's Reed Warbler was trapped and ringed near Tömörd on August 15th. With the observations of these species the number of bird species that have ever been proven to occur in Hungary has risen to 411.

Keywords: official bird checklist, Hungarian Checklist and Rarities Committee, Spanish Sparrow, *Passer hispaniolensis*, Blyth's Reed Warbler, *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Összefoglalás 2014-ben két faunára új madárfaj bukkant fel Magyarországon: a berki veréb és a berki nádiposzáta. Egy pár berki veréb költött Bácsborsódon 2014. június 13. és július 31. között egy gólyafészek oldalában. A berki nádiposztát 2013. augusztus 15-én gyűrűzés során fogták Tömördön. E fajok előkerülésével a Magyarország valaha bizonyítottan előfordult madárfajok száma 411-re emelkedett.

Kulcsszavak: Magyarország madarainak névjegyzéke, MME Nomenclator Bizottság, berki veréb, *Passer hispaniolensis*, berki nádiposzáta, *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

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In 2013, two bird species were accepted by the Hungarian Checklist and Rarities Committee as new to the Hungarian fauna. These are the Spanish Sparrow (Dezső 2014, Schneider & Tamás 2014) and the Blyth's Reed Warbler (Illés 2014). By these, the number of bird species found in Hungary to date has risen to 411.

Passer hispaniolensis (Temminck, 1820) – Spanish Sparrow

June 13th – July 31st 2014, Bácsborsód, (Bács-Kiskun County), 1 breeding pair (V. Schneider, Á. Tamás and others).

The breeding area of the Spanish Sparrow extends from Northwest-Africa and the Ibe-

rian Peninsula through Sardinia, the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor and the Middle East to the south Caspian region, Amudarya, Kizil-kum and Tian Shan (Clement *et al.* 1993, del Hoyo *et al.* 2009). It favors humid, wet river valleys with tall oak and poplar or pine trees, on which it nests in colonies, but it also breeds on plantations, drier areas and in oases (Alonso 1997). Spanish Sparrows nest most commonly in the canopies of introduced planted trees. This strategy, with a good access to and diversity of potential nesting sites, enables a further expansion of the species (Mužinić *et al.* 2014). Its colonies are generally distant from human settlements, but in places where there are no, or few House Sparrows

(*Passer domesticus*) it may breed in settlements as well (Alonso 1997). In populated areas it usually breeds in the side of stork nests or in the nests of House Martins, similarly to other sparrow species.

It spread from the Balkan Peninsula toward the northwest in the 1950s, as a result of which through Bulgaria it reached Dobrogea and Moldova (Baumgart & Stephan 1974, Alonso 1997). It first appeared in Romania in 1964, in Dobrogea (Papadopol 1965), then in the end of the 1970s it spread from here toward the west, through the flatlands situated north of the Danube, in 1972 it already reached the vicinity of the Iron Gate (Radu 1973). Its population size reached its peak in the 1970s, in the 1990s its population declined, several colonies ceased (Munteanu 1998). Between 2000 and 2002 its total population in Romania was estimated to be between 125,000 and 254,000 (BirdLife International 2004), in the Romanian portion of Bánát, near the Danube, 50–70 pairs nest in fluctuating numbers (Rašajsky & Kiss 2004). It first nested in Serbia in 1970 (Donji Stupanj) (Ham 1971), then it spread toward the north, it was first proven to nest in Vojvodina in 1973, at Titel (Šoti 1973). Between 1990 and 2002 its Serbian population was estimated to be 1000–2000 pairs, its population in Crna Gora 800–1200 pairs, with a fluctuating population size in both areas (Puzović *et al.* 2003). Between 1990 and 2002 a maximum of 10 pairs nested in Vojvodina (Puzović *et al.* 2003), at the same time others estimated the nesting population in the Serbian portion of the south part of Banat to be 20–50 pairs (Rašajsky & Kiss 2004). In Vojvodina, it sporadically appeared in multiple locations in the past decade. In the summers of 2003 and 2004 one male specimen each was observed in Novi Sad (Tucakov 2004).

In 2005 one pair nested in the vicinity of Vršac (Vučanović 2012). In 2009 it nested in the eastern part of Serbia, in the vicinity of Radujevac and Prahovo along the Danube (Petrović & Radišić 2009), in 2010 near Jablanka (Vučanović 2012). In 2012 at least three pairs moved to the north of Belgrade (Sakule) (Ružić & Rajković 2012), and in this same year a specimen was also observed in Apatin (Spremo 2012).

From the 1970s onwards, the Spanish Sparrow has been spreading its range along the Dalmatian and Croatian coast in a northwest direction (Lukač 1988, 2004), in 1990 it was breeding on the western part of the Istria Peninsula (Rubinič 2001). In 2002 the Croatian breeding population was estimated to be between 10,000 and 50,000 pairs (BirdLife International 2004). The first Slovenian data originate from the October of 1988, Vrhnika (Grošelj 1989). In the summer of 1999, nest material collecting male Spanish Sparrows, manifesting territorial behavior were observed in two separate locations in eastern Slovenia (Vrezec & Štumberger 2000).

The Spanish Sparrow was first observed in Hungary on June 13th 2014, in Bácsborsód. During the course of ringing stork fledglings, a male Spanish Sparrow feeding nestlings was observed at one of the Bácsborsód stork nests. Later the feeding female was also observed many times on two-thirds of days of observations, thus it was proven that it was not a hybrid pair. In the end of June, after the first brood had already fledged, the birds commenced a secondary breeding, the male was carrying nest material for days to the new nest being built in the side of the stork nest, in the last third of July the male and female was feeding active (Dezső 2014, Schneider & Tamás 2014).

This was the first occurrence, and also breeding, of this species within the current borders of Hungary. Since the nominate race nests in Europe, the pair breeding in Hungary also belonged to this subspecies (ssp. *hispaniolensis*).

As a result of the spreading of the species in Romania and Serbia, it had been near Hungary's southern border for a long time, thus in reality it is not surprising that it first appeared in a settlement neighboring Vojvodina. In the upcoming years it will be worth inspecting stork nests in the southernmost parts of Bács-Kiskun and Csongrád counties, since further occurrences and even nestings of Spanish Sparrows are expected. Moreover according to simulation models a significant further northern direction spreading of the species is expected in the next 100 years (Huntley *et al.* 2007).

Acrocephalus dumetorum Blyth, 1849 – Blyth's Reed Warbler

August 15th 2014, Tömörd (Vas County), Lake Nagy, 1 adult exemplar (P. Illés, Cs. Lőrincz, P. Bánhidi and others).

The breeding area of Blyth's Reed Warbler extends from the Baltic States and the southern part of Finland through the upper Volga and Kama area, through the Ural Mountains, Irtis and upper Ob area to the Baikal Mountains in the east and the Altai, Lake Balkhash, Tian Shan and Turkmenistan in the southeast (del Hoyo *et al.* 2006).

Its favored habitats are riverine forests with dense undergrowth, shrubby gullies, bushy forest edges, young forests, willow scrub with birches, overgrown clearings, dense mulberry and raspberry scrub, nettles, gardens, as well as abandoned and overgrown agricultural areas (Koskimies & Priednieks 1997). It has

been spreading toward the west since the beginning of the 20th century, probably due to the abandonment of the cultivation in agricultural areas and a decline of cattle grazing, resulting in shrubs growing on plough lands and grazing fields, thus the extent of suitable habitats increased considerably (Koskimies & Priednieks 1997).

In the beginning of the 20th century the western edge of its distribution area was still in the vicinity of Lake Ladoga. It appeared in the southern part of Finland in the 1930s, its first nesting occurred in 1947, and by the 1960s it became widespread in this area. In the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the Finnish population was estimated to be 5000–8000 pairs (Koskimies & Priednieks 1997, BirdLife International 2004), while in 2012 it was already estimated to be 16,000–59,000 pairs, which shows an increasing tendency (<http://bd.eionet.europa.eu>). In Estonia, it was first breeding in 1938, but it only became a regular breeder in the 1960s; its Estonian population was estimated to be 2000–3000 in the 1990s (Koskimies & Priednieks 1997), and 2000–4000 in 1998 (BirdLife International 2004). Its population has shown an intensely increasing tendency since the 1980s, thus the number of breeding pairs was estimated to be between 60,000 and 120,000 in 2012 (Elts 2012). Its first nesting in Latvia occurred in 1944, in the end of the 1990s the number of singing, permanent resident males was estimated to be 3000–6000 in the country, but there has been a large fluctuation in its population from year to year, and a large proportion of males were left without a mate (Koskimies & Priednieks 1997). In Lithuania, its population was estimated to be 200–300 pairs between 1999 and 2001 (BirdLife International 2004), and currently 500–700 pairs. (<http://bd.eionet.europa>.

eu). In the 1990s, it appeared as a breeding species in Belarus, where its population was estimated to be 1000–2000 between 1997 and 2002. In the 1990s, the first singing males appeared in Poland as well, their number was estimated to be 0–50 between 1995 and 2000 (BirdLife International 2004), and 6–28 between 2008 and 2012 (<http://bd.eionet.europa.eu>). The first breeding in Poland was confirmed in 2011 (Tumiel & Grigoruk 2011). In the end of the 1950s, it also appeared in Sweden, where its first confirmed nesting occurred in the 1970s (Slack 2009). Until the end of the 1990s, its breeding population was a maximum of 10 pairs, estimated to be 5–15 pairs at the turn of the millennium (BirdLife International 2004), and 50–200 pairs between 2008 and 2012 (<http://bd.eionet.europa.eu>). In recent years singing males have appeared in the southeast part of Norway as well (for example 15 in 2007). In the 1990s its total European population was estimated to be between 2,000,000 and 5,000,000 pairs, with the majority of these birds nesting in Russia, where its population is stable (BirdLife International 2004).

It occurs as a rare vagrant in several European countries outside the breeding area. A relatively large amount of data is known from Northern-Europe and the British Isles, however, in other parts of Europe it is very rare (Lewington *et al.* 1991). Since its wintering grounds are in India and Myanmar (del Hoyo *et al.* 2006), therefore, its migration routes mostly avoid Central-Europe. The majority of British data originate from the autumn period. Birds nesting in the western part of the breeding area migrate as early as in July and August, however, vagrants appear in Britain considerably later (from mid-August to mid-November, the peak being the end of September, beginning

of October) (Slack 2009). This suggests that autumn vagrants do not arrive from the western part of the breeding area, rather from further east, and their appearance can possibly be attributed to a reverse migration of young birds (Gilroy & Lees 2003, Lees & Gilroy 2009). The numbers of spring data are significantly lower, likely explained by spring ‘overshooting’ (Slack 2009).

Since the 1990s the number of vagrants has been increasing all over Europe, likely due to the westward spread of the species and also due to an increase of research effort identification knowledge.

Among the countries neighboring Hungary, more data is known from Romania. Several individuals occurred in the Danube-delta and its vicinity, although many of these observations have not been verified. Four birds were ringed and three collected in the Danube-delta in August 1975 (Paspaleva 1976). Between 2005 and 2014 at least eight specimens were ringed in the Danube-delta, all between May and June, although only one of them has been certified so far (May 2014, Sfântu Gheorghe) (Sz. Daróczy pers. comm.). Singing males were observed in 1995 and 1996 (Weber 2000), therefore, likely nesting is assumed there (Munteanu 1998). It first appeared as a vagrant in Slovenia in 1990 (September 1990, Vrhnika) (Šere 1991), and a total of 16 occurrences are documented, all from August to September (Bračko 2006, Hanžel & Šere 2012). One individual was mist-netted in Slovakia (May 2002, Trnava) (Trnka & Matula 2004), so far this represents its sole occurrence in the Carpathian Basin.

In Hungary, one Blyth’s Reed Warbler was mist-netted and ringed on August 15th of 2014, at Lake Nagy, near Tömörd, by Péter Illés in the Tömörd Bird Ringing Station (Illés 2014). This was the first confirmed re-

cord of the species in Hungary, and the second record in the Carpathian Basin.

Most European vagrants occur from the end of August to mid-November, when typically young birds appear likely due to a kind of reverse migration. However, the specimen caught in Tömörd was an adult bird, as identified on the base its plumage wear. This bird's age and the relatively early date suggests, that this specimen probably did not arrive here from the more eastern part of the breed-

ing area rather it might belong to the North-east-European breeding population. Scarce appearances of vagrants may also be expected in the future, since its Northeast-European breeding population is rapidly growing.

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