

**DUSKY WARBLER *PHYLLOSCOPUS FUSCATUS* (BLYTH, 1842) –  
A NEW SPECIES FOR ORNITHOFAUNA OF SERBIA**

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The Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (Blyth, 1842) is a secretive, shy, small passerine species belonging to the leaf warblers (Phylloscopidae). This species breeds in the E Palearctic biogeographic realm at temperate and high latitudes of C and E Siberia, Mongolia, N parts of China and east to Sakhalin Island from the end of May until mid-August (Snow & Cramp 1998, Clement 2020). During breeding, it inhabits scrub and low, dense vegetation in taiga forest, interspaced with water flows, mires, bogs, and wet meadows from lowlands and river valleys up to 4.200 m above sea level (Forstmeier *et al.* 2001). As an altitudinal and long-distance migrant species, Dusky Warbler typically spends the non-breeding period of the year in the S and SE Asia: from NE-E India in the west throughout Nepal, S China, and Japan in the north and Malaysia and Singapore in the south (Snow & Cramp 1998, Clement 2020). Like most Old-world warblers, Dusky Warbler represents a predominantly insectivorous species. Irregularly, it also eats snails, spiders, and tiny seeds (Snow & Cramp 1998, Clement 2020).

In this article, we report on a new bird species of the genus *Phylloscopus* (Boie, 1826) for the Serbian avifauna, i.e., the first record of Dusky Warbler in Serbia.

On 20 October 2017, at 7 am, one specimen of Dusky Warbler was captured on Ludaš Lake near Hajdukovo village (Subotica municipality, Vojvodina Province, N Serbia). The individual was captured as part of a long-term research scheme on bird migration phenology that has lasted since 1985. The bird was caught in an ornithological mist net (250 cm high, 16 × 16 mm mesh size) on a small island (ca. 50 × 25 m) surrounded by water and a broad belt of old-growth reeds *Phragmites communis*. The



Fig. 1. – Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* captured on Ludaš Lake near Hajdukovo village, N Serbia, 20 October 2017 (photo J. Gergely).

island is partly covered with bushes (*Sambucus nigra*, *Prunus spinosa*) and tall, ruderal vegetation. The exact coordinates of the capture site were 19.831498° E, 46.104001° N. Although accurately identifying species from the genus *Phylloscopus* could be quite challenging, mainly because of their small size, very active nature, and similarities between species, in this case, there was no doubt about the identification, which was straightforward. The captured individual shows a typical *Phylloscopus* plumage pattern and general appearance. It was relatively short-tailed, round-winged without pale wing bar(s), with a fine, pointed, dark bill, uniform dull brownish upperparts, dusky buff-brown underparts, conspicuous narrow supercilium

extending well behind the eye, relatively pale thin tarsus, and yellow-ochre feet (Fig. 1). The supercilium, one of the main identification characters, starts with whitish colour at the bill base and gradually turns cream-rufous-buff towards the nape, clearly lacking in any yellow colouration (Fig. 1). This distinctive characteristic was the opposite in Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (Radde, 1863) - an adelphotaxon morphologically most like Dusky Warbler.

In addition, there are no mottled ear coverts in captured individual as at Radde's Warbler. The bill measurements, the most important feature in separating these two similar species (Svensson 1992, Bradshaw 1994, Demongin 2016), confirmed that it was a Dusky Warbler specimen. According to Svensson (1992) and Demongin (2016), the depth and width of the bill at the proximal edge of nostrils are (3.0) 3.2–3.9 mm and 3.5–4.4 mm at Radde's Warbler and 2.3–2.9 mm and 2.5–3.4 (3.7) mm at Dusky Warbler. In our specimen, the depth was 2.4 mm, and the width of the bill was 3.2 mm. Other obtained measurements were: body mass 9.8 g, wing length (maximum chord) 58 mm, tail length (to the back method) 52 mm, length of short first primary feather compared to the length of longest primary coverts +16 mm, wing formula  $|45|02|01|1|3|5|7|$ , wing index 28 mm, I/II was 11 mm and value of fat score was five. All measurements were taken by Pessola spring balance (g), stop ruler (mm), pin-point ruler (mm) and Vernier calliper (mm) following standard procedures described by Svensson (1992) and Busse & Meissner (2015), except the fat score, which follows methodology from Kaiser (1993). Based on gentle yellowish tinges on the flanks, belly, and chest (Svensson 1992), we deduced that it was a juvenile, first-year bird (EURING code 3). Two days after, on 22 October 2022, at 8 am, the same individual of Dusky Warbler was captured in the exact location. On that occasion, we measured only body mass, which was 10.4 g. Consequently, it can be assumed that Dusky Warbler spent a few days intensively foraging and collecting extra fat deposits at the same location.

The above-described record represents the first finding of this Asian vagrant in Serbia (Šćiban *et al.* 2015). Also, it officially represents the seventh species from the genus *Phylloscopus* in the country (Šćiban *et al.* 2015). Across the European continent, the Dusky Warbler represents a scarce but regular vagrant species. There are no less than 1480 records in Europe ([www.tarsiger.com](http://www.tarsiger.com)). Although specimens of Dusky Warbler have reached almost every European country, the occurrence pattern was rather concentrated. More than 80% of all findings were in Scandinavian countries, Great Britain and adjacent countries that lies on the North Sea ([www.tarsiger.com](http://www.tarsiger.com)). In contrast, relatively few sporadic findings were recorded in the interior parts of the continent, especially in the landlocked

countries of C and SE Europe. For instance, there are only two confirmed findings in Switzerland and Austria, four in the Czech Republic, and none have been recorded in Slovakia. Therefore, our finding deserves special attention in the biogeographical sense. According to various, mainly birding web and Facebook pages in neighbouring countries, there are 21 observations of different individuals of Dusky Warbler: ten in Hungary, six in Romania, three in Croatia and one in Bulgaria and Albania. Some specimens were observed for several consecutive days in the same locality. Almost all findings fall within the period of the last eight years. There is no information about any record from Bosnia & Herzegovina and North Macedonia (e.g., Veleviski & Vasić 2017). Regarding the period of the year, most European findings of Dusky Warbler occur during October (Harrop 2007, www.tarsiger.com), which overlaps with migration phenology and arrival in common wintering grounds in SE Asia (Bozó *et al.* 2016). Thus, our above-described record entirely fits this temporal pattern.

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## ТАМНИ ЗВИЖДАК *PHYLLOSCOPUS FUSCATUS* (БЛЫТН, 1842) – НОВА ВРСТА ЗА ОРНИТОФАУНУ СРБИЈЕ

ОТО СЕКЕРЕШ, ИШТВАН БАРТОЛ, ДРАЖЕНКО З. РАЈКОВИЋ

### РЕЗИМЕ

Током редовног јесењег хватања и обележавања птица на северном ободу Лудашког језера код села Хајдуково (општина Суботица, Северна Србија), дана 20.10.2017. године у 7 часова ухваћен је и обележен један примерак тамног звиждака *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (Phylloscopidae). Овај иначе редак азијски гост у Европи, затечен је уплетен у мрежу постављену на мањем острву које је било покривено зовом (*Sambucus nigra*), трњином (*Prunus spinosa*) и високом рудералном вегетацијом. Након обележавања металним прстеном измерени су морфолошки карактери ради потврде идентификације врсте, док је пре самог пуштања јединка фотографисана. Описани налаз представља први доказан примерак и уједно седму врсту птице из рода *Phylloscopus* за Србију.