

Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle «Grigore Antipa»	Vol. LIII	pp. 319–328	© Décembre 2010
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DOI: 10.2478/v10191-010-0022-7

**PHENOLOGY AND BIOMETRICS OF MOUSTACHED WARBLER  
*ACROCEPHALUS MELANOPOGON*  
(PASSERIFORMES: SYLVIIDAE) IN ROMANIA**

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**Abstract.** A complete list of all records on the Moustached Warbler (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) available in Romania was compiled from literature and completed with new records based on field studies, examination of museum collections and data gathered from ringing campaigns of Romanian Ornithological Ringing Centre during 1990 – 2010. The record review is complemented by distribution map. Biometric data of caught specimens are presented and supplemented by data from the literature of other specimens from Romania.

**Résumé.** On présente une révision des données de phénologie et de distribution de la Lusciniole à moustaches (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) en Roumanie, y compris les données de la littérature, auxquelles nous avons ajouté nos propres observations, les données obtenues en examinant les collection des musées, ainsi que les données provenant des campagnes de baguage de la Centrale Ornithologique Roumaine; entre les années 1990 et 2010. La révision de ces signalements est illustrée par un carte de distribution. On présente aussi les données biométriques des exemplaires capturés ainsi que celles indiquées dans la littérature pour les exemplaires provenant de Roumanie.

**Key words:** Moustached Warbler, *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, distribution, Palaearctic Region, the Danube Delta, Romania.

INTRODUCTION

The nominated race of Moustached Warbler, *Acrocephalus melanopogon melanopogon* (Temminck, 1823) is spread across southern Europe, eastern Ukraine, western Turkey and northwestern Africa (Pearson, 2006) and is a sedentary or partially migratory to migratory birds, from north of the breeding range moving south to winter (Cramp, 1992). A revision of the status of population through Europe was made by Leisler (1973). The wintering sites are chiefly in coastal areas (especially estuaries) and islands in the Mediterranean region. According to Cramp (1992), the populations in southern France, Catalonia, Mallorca, and northwestern Italy are mostly sedentary or partial migrants to east, while the populations in inland areas such as Austria and northern Balkans winter in very small numbers in eastern Sicily. Most of them winter on coasts of northern and central Italy, former Yugoslavia, and northern and central Greece. The northern limit roughly follows the 4°C January isotherm, thus the winter range lying within permanently frost-free areas. In Romania the Moustached Warbler is reported as a summer visitor and breeding species in large effective by some authors, aspect that will be commented further.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Ringing campaigns of migrant birds were developed in the Danube Delta and Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon Complex between 2004 and 2010, and from a total of 22,500

ringed passerines, 110 were Moustached Warbler. All caught specimens were measured and weighed. The biometric measurements were taken following the recommendations of Svenson (2006), as follows: the length of the flattened wing, the R3 length; the tarsus length from the notch on the back of the intertarsal joint to the toes joint; the bill length measured to the feather margin (F); the roundness of the tail considered as the difference between the tip of longest (median) and the tip of shortest (external) tail-feathers while the tail is closed; all caught specimens were weighed using a Pessola microline scale. Regarding the interpretation of distribution maps from atlases of breeding birds in Romania we have used the coding system provided by Lehrer & Lehrer (1990).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Moustached Warbler (Figs 2, 3) is a rare species in Romanian bird fauna, dates on its distribution being scarce, resumed especially to Banat and the Danube Delta, with some mentions from Transylvania (see *Records*). Linking all records from literature with phenological data, supplemented by our data gathered from the Romanian Ornithological Centre ringing campaigns, it shows a discontinuous areal, and certainly the east part of the country overlapping on a migration corridor, which seems to follow the Black Sea coasts. The winter records from Satchinez Reserve (Timiș county), as mentioned by Leisler (1973) and Cramp (1992) are only wrong interpretations the information from Nadra (1962). Linția (1946) notes that the species has also been collected in 1835 in Banat near the Bega Channel by Neumann and Petenyi, and mentions it as a pretty common species in Banat, even though the configuration of the ponds had suffered a lot of changes (o.n. compared to 1835) around the areas where there were standing and flowing waters, surrounded by reed, rush and small bushes. On the Black Sea shore north of the Danube Delta in Ukraine, only one specimen has been ringed in 1989, comparing with 62 specimens ringed in Romanian part of the Black Sea shore at Histria from 1990 to 1994, Scegolev & Marinov (1997).

#### RECORDS

*Original records:* - Letea (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 1 specimen ringed in 22.IX.2009; 42 specimens (15 adults and 27 juveniles) ringed between 18-23.IX.2010; - Sfântu Gheorghe (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 1 adult female catch on 27.V.1979 by Maria Paspaleva (unpublished informations); 23 specimens (one adult and 22 juveniles) ringed between 19.VII-12.X.2008 (Romanian Ornithological Centre database); - Sahalin Island (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) one juvenile ringed in 10.VIII.2008 (Romanian Ornithological Centre database); - Grindul Lupilor (Razelm-Sione Lagoon Complex) 2 adults caught/only 1 ringed in 20.VII.1980 by Maria Paspaleva (unpublished informations); 42 specimens (38 adults and four juveniles) ringed between 13.IX-29.X.2004 (Romanian Ornithological Centre database).

*Published records:* - Sărmașu, Cluj region (Schenk, 1917, in Leisler, 1973), 1 spec./03.VII.1910, Salmen, 1982); - Satchinez (Timiș county) 1 adult ♂ inv. no. 434 in collection of The Banat Museum Timișoara, collected by Linția D., in 23.III.1936, (Linția, 1944; Nadra, 1972; Kiss, 2005), breeding, present between III-IX, (Rasajski & Kiss, 2004); observed in VI, VII, IX (Kiss, 1999); - Bega Channel (Timișoara?, Banat region), where the species was collected in 1835 by Neumann and Petenyi, information taken by Linția (1946) from Frivalddszy, 1891, with the mention that it is a pretty common species in Banat although the configuration of

ponds has changed (o.n. from 1835) wherever there are standing or flowing waters; surrounded by reeds, reed, rush and bushes; - Valea lui Mihai (Bihar county) 8 clutches totalizing 40 eggs of *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, collected between 1932-1937, in Ladyslau Dobay collection from Criş-Rivers Region Museum from Oradea, with inventory numbers as follows: 1/4, 16.05.1932 (inv. no. 1134); 1/4 14.05.1933 (inv. no. 3702); 1/4, 16.05.1933 (inv. no. 3703); 1/6, 10.05.1934 (inv. no. 1143); 1/5, 10.05.1934 (inv. no. 1144); 1/4, 23.05.1934 (inv. no. 2626); 1/5, 17.05.1936 (inv. no. 1145); 1/4, 11.06.1937 (inv. no. 1133), (Beczy, 1971, 1975); - Ciumbrud (Alba county) 1 adult ♂ collected in 15.VII.1887, in Aiud Museum of Natural Sciencies, (Lorincz, 1980 in Klemm & Kohl, 1988); - Zăul de Câmpie (Mureş county) in 27.08.1930 (Keve, 1973); - Iernut (Mureş county) 1 specimen observed in 25.VI.1979, (Klemm & Kohl, 1988); - Sulina (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 1 adult ♂ inv. no. 5176 in "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History (GANMNH), collected by Maria Paspaleva in 06.VIII.1975, (Papadopol & Tâlpeanu, 1987), 3 specimens ringed 2 km South of Sulina in VIII.1975, (Paspaleva & Tâlpeanu 1980); - Gârla Împuţita (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 8.5 km south of Sulina, 1 adult specimen ringed in 08.X.1976, (Paspaleva & Tâlpeanu, 1980); - Sahalin Island (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 1 spec. in VIII.1977, (Paspaleva & Tâlpeanu, 1980); - Histria (Constanţa county), 17 specimens ringed in VIII-IX.1991, (Weber, 1991; Laiu, 1992), 22 specimens ringed in 4-24.IX.1993, (Weber, 1993), 8 specimens ringed in 22.VIII-09.IX.1994, (Weber, 1995); - Nuntaşi Lake (Histria) 3 specimens in 23-27.VIII.1992, (Just & Weber, 1992); - Maliuc, Furtuna Lake (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 2 juveniles captured between 22-28.VIII.2001, (Ion & Ion, 2002); - Nufăru (Danube Delta, Tulcea county) 1 specimen observed in 19.V.1974, (Vaucher, 1975); - Grindul Lupilor (Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon Complex, Tulcea county) 8 specimens ringed between 2004 - 2006 as follows: 1 spec./2004; 4 specs/2005; 3 specs/2006, (Kalocsa et al., 2007);

*Possible records:* - Dobrogea *sensu lato*, mentioned by Alleon (1886), under the name "*Cettia melanopogon* Z. Gerbe" with the mention that "it is less abundant and hardly observed" - probably the first record of Moustached Warbler in Romania; - Danube Delta *sensu lato*, Dombrowski, 1912; Radu, 1974, 1979 as nesting species; Paspaleva & Tâlpeanu (1980) as nesting species; "locally breeding in red-beds", Munteanu (2006); - Aiud (Kovats & Lorincz, 1992) probably doubtful identification; - Maramureş and Crişana regions *sensu lato*, Leisler (1973), doubtful as cited by Linţia (1946), with no mentions from the quoted author.

*Records from Romanian Ornithological Centre Ringing campaigns:*

Within the period 1940-1970, Romanian Ornithological Centre has reported a single ringed specimen, Cătuneanu (1999). For the situation of ringed Moustached Warbler between 1990 and 2004 see records.

Data gathered during ringing campaigns developed between 2004 and 2010 in the Danube Delta shows that out of more than 22,500 ringed passerines, *Acrocephalus melanopogon* was present in a very small number (110 specimens) which means less than 0.5%, one more argument that the Moustached Warbler is a rarity even in the Danube Delta. Detailed accounts of the capture of Moustached Warbler during these campaigns are as follows: Grindul Lupilor, between 07.IX-01.XI.2004, 10,527 passerines were ringed, including 43 M.W. caught from 13.IX to 29.X (0.4% of total ringed passerines); Sfântu Gheorghe, between 07.IX-01.XI.2007, 7,284 passerines ringed and no specimen of M.W.; Sfântu Gheorghe, between 19.VII-26.X.2008, 4497 passerines ringed including 23 M.W. caught from 19.VII to 12.X (0.51% of total ringed passerines); Sahalin Island, between 25.VII-01.VIII.2008, 495 passerines were



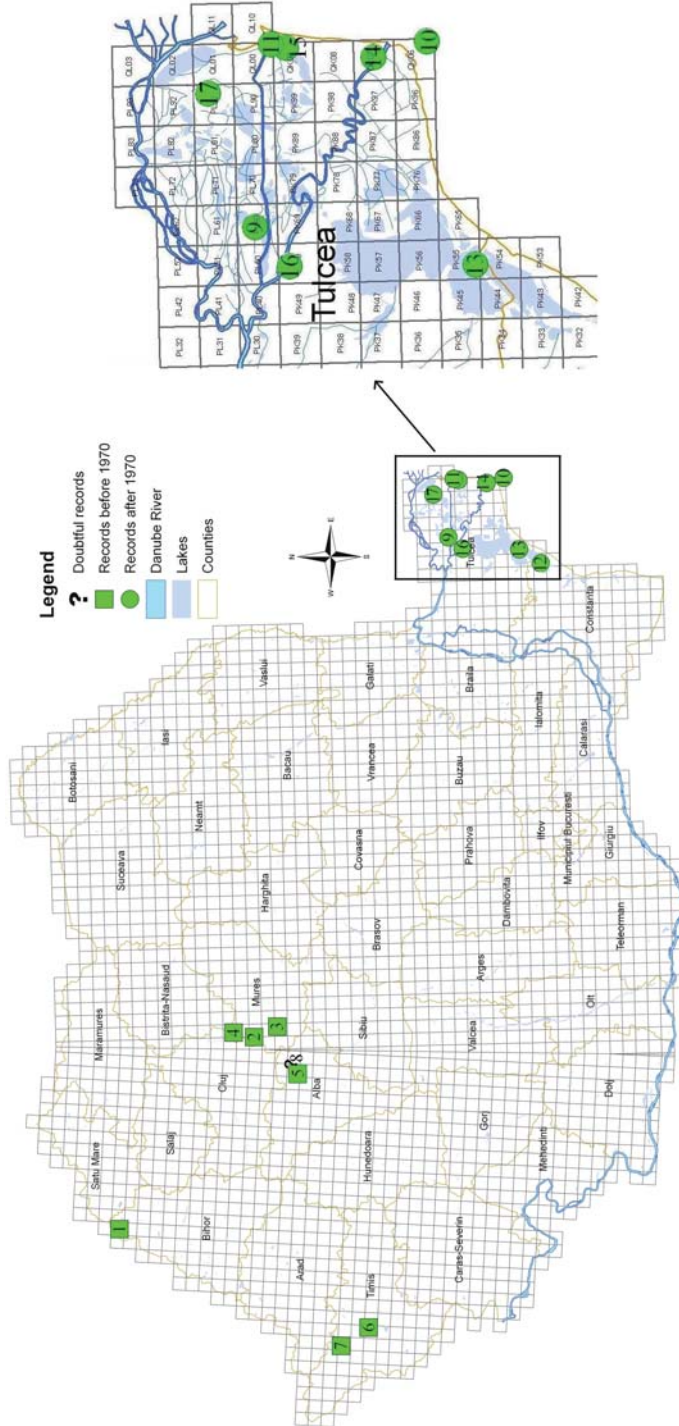


Fig. 1 - The distribution map of *Acrocephalus melanopogon* in Romania (U.T.M. quadrants 10x10km). 1-7, Records before 1970 as follows: 1 – Valea lui Mihai (Bihor county); 2 – Zăul de Câmpie (Mureș county) ; 3 – Iernut (Mureș county); 4 – Sârmașu (Cluj county); 5 – Ciumbud (Alba county); 6 – Bega Chanel (Timișoara?, Timiș county); 7 – Satchinez (Timiș county); 8 – Aiud (Alba county), doubtful record; 9-16, Records after 1970 as follows: Danube Delta (Tulcea county): 9 – Maliuc, Furtuna Lake; 10 – Sahalin Island; 11 - Sulima; 12 - Histria; 13 – Grindul Lupilor; 14 – Sfântu Gheorghe; 15 – Gârla Împușta; 16 – Nufăru; 17 – Letea.

## BIOMETRICS

Measurements value of available museum specimens, and other recorded specimens from Romanian Ornithological Centre database are presented in table 3. Also, a short analyze of biometric measurements (mean  $\pm$  Standard Deviation) of Moustached Warbler ringed from 2004 to 2010 are presented in table 2. The obtained values do not show significant differences between analyzed specimens and values from literature, Cramp (1992) and Svenson (2006).

Table 2

Biometrics measurements (average  $\pm$  SD) of live caught specimens of *Acrocephalus melanopogon* in Romania from 2004 to 2010.

	Wing length (mm)	R3 length (mm)	Tarsus (mm)	Bill (mm)	Body weight (g)	Rounded of Tail
Unsexed adults	57.428 $\pm$ 2.052	41.847 $\pm$ 2.564	21.093 $\pm$ 0.734	11.135 $\pm$ 0.507	10.828 $\pm$ 0.805	10.54 $\pm$ 1.479
Variation interval	51 - 61	37 - 46	20.2 - 23.1	10.33 - 12.3	9.5 - 13.4	9 - 12.2
Sample number	(56)	(23)	(15)	(15)	(60)	(5)
Juveniles	55.31 $\pm$ 2.037	41.131 $\pm$ 3.56	20.823 $\pm$ 0.973	10.961 $\pm$ 0.533	10.246 $\pm$ 0.857	9.885 $\pm$ 0.992
Variation interval	52 - 60	33 - 49	19.1 - 22.5	9.7 - 12.2	8.5 - 13.5	7.9 - 11.4
Sample number	(29)	(45)	(26)	(26)	(43)	(14)
Total (ad. + juv.)	56.639 $\pm$ 2.319	41.248 $\pm$ 3.283	20.861 $\pm$ 0.964	11.019 $\pm$ 0.519	10.583 $\pm$ 0.878	10.057 $\pm$ 1.133
Variation interval	51-61	33-49	18.4-23.1	9.7-12.3	8.5-13.1	7.9-12.2
Sample number	(83)	(66)	(42)	(42)	(98)	(19)

Table 3

Biometrics measurements of previous recorded specimens of *Acrocephalus melanopogon* from Romania.

Age & sex	Collecting place & date	Total length (mm)	Wing length (mm)	Tail length (mm)	Tarsus (mm)	Bill (mm)	R3 length (mm)	Reference
Ad ♂	Danube Delta	-	56	48	21	10	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Ad ♂	Danube Delta	130	59	47	20	11	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Ad ♂	Danube Delta	-	56	47	20	10	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Ad ♀	Danube Delta	-	56.5	48	21	10	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Juv	Danube Delta	128	56	47	20	10	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Juv	Danube Delta	127	55.5	46	21	9.7	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Juv	Danube Delta	-	56	47	20	9.7	-	Dombrowski (1912)
Ad	Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon Complex/ 20.VII.1980	-	55	41	21	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
Ad	Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon Complex/ 20.VII.1980	-	58	50	20	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
Ad ♀	Sfântu Gheorghe - Danube Delta/ 27.V.1979	-	57	47	20	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
Ad	Gârla Impușita - Danube Delta/ 08.X.1976	-	58	50	21	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
Juv	Sulina - Danube Delta/ 06.VIII.1975	-	55	44	20	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
-	Sulina - Danube Delta/ 06.VIII.1975	-	56	52	20	-	-	M. Paspaleva (unpublished info.)
Ad ♂	Sulina - Danube Delta/ 06.VIII.1975	130	60	53	21.7	10.85	42	GANMNH collection (inv. no.: 5176)

After analyzing all this data it is easy to observe that concrete breeding records in Romania are very scarce, based only on few clutches collected in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Transylvania (see breeding records).

For the Danube Delta, the only certain proof of breeding is the catching of an adult female with advanced incubation patch at Sfântu Gheorghe, by Maria Paspaleva in 27.V.1979 (unpublished information). The other “breeding mentions” for the Danube Delta can be considered doubtful as they are not based on materials or concrete mentions. This absence of breeding data for such a long period of time shows that most probably the Moustached Warbler was an occasional or accidental breeding species in Romania, probably in small number of pairs and for short periods of time. We do not totally exclude the possibility that it could breed in small numbers in the Danube Delta, but for sure the effectives from the literature are overestimated. The data accumulated so far in the last years show that it is a regular migrant at least in the autumn passage over the Danube Delta and Razelm-Sinoe Lagoon Complex.



Fig. 2 - A ringed specimen of *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (Letea, the Danube Delta, September 2010). (Photo: V. Pocora)

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our gratitude to Dr. Maria Paspaleva and Mr. Matei Tălpeanu who kindly put at our disposal their measurements and records of Moustached Warbler from the Danube Delta, and to anonymous reviewers, for improvements to the manuscript. This research was partially supported by CNCIS – UEFISCSU, Project PNCDI II – PD no 121/2010 and by CNCIS – UEFISCSU, Project PNCDI II – IDEI no 1985/2008.



Fig. 3 - *Acrocephalus melanopogon* caught at Letea, the Danube Delta, in September 2010. (Photo: V. Pocora)

FENOLOGIA ȘI BIOMETRIA PRIVIGHETORII DE BALTĂ *ACROCEPHALUS MELANOPOGON* (PASSERIFORMES: SYLVIIDAE) ÎN ROMÂNIA

REZUMAT

Este prezentată o revizie a datelor de fenologie și distribuție ale privighetorii de baltă (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) în România, incluzând datele publicate în literatură, la care am adăugat observațiile proprii, datele obținute din examinarea colecțiilor din muzee și datele provenite din campaniile de inelare ale Centralei Ornitologice Române între 1990 și 2010. Revizia acestor semnalări este ilustrată pe o hartă de distribuție. Sunt prezentate de asemenea datele biometrice ale exemplarelor capturate și datele biometrice din literatură ale exemplarelor provenind din România.

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Received: October 4, 2010  
Accepted: November 5, 2010

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