

## FIRST RECORD OF ARCTIC WARBLER *PHYLLOSCOPUS BOREALIS* FOR THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

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**SUMMARY.-** *First record of Arctic Warbler Phylloscopus borealis for the Balearic Islands. An Arctic Warbler Phylloscopus borealis was discovered in the finca of Ariant (Pollença) on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The bird remained for only one day. This bird represents the first record for the Balearics Islands, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> for Spain.*

**Key words:** Arctic Warbler, *Phylloscopus borealis*, sonogram, rarity, Ariant, Pollença, Balearics Islands.

**RESUM.-** *Primer registre d'ull de bou boreal Phylloscopus borealis per a les Illes Balears. Un exemplar d'ull de bou boreal Phylloscopus borealis va ser trobada a la finca d'Ariant (Pollença) el 12 de setembre de 2020. L'au va romandre només un dia. Representa la primera cita per a les Illes Balears i la segona per a Espanya.*

**Paraules clau:** Ull de bou boreal, *Phylloscopus borealis*, sonograma, raresa, Ariant, Pollença, Illes Balears.

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On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2020 Jason Moss and Elisa Miquel visited Ariant, a private estate within the municipality of Pollença. The principle reason for the visit was to conduct a butterfly transect. This invertebrate survey is conducted every two weeks as part of biodiversity studies performed by the Fundació Vida Silvestre Mediterrànea (FVSM), as part of a wider number of regional transects coordinated by the Catalan Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (CBMS). Along with the various species of butterfly and odonata recorded, migratory birds were also obvious throughout. A classic selection of species for September, the most abundant was

*Ficedula hypoleuca*, with 15 noted across the woodland habitats. Five *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* were also present, along with 4 *Saxicola rubetra* dotting fence-lines and field edges. Two *Anthus trivialis*, a *Muscicapa striata* of the nominate subspecies *striata*, a single *Oenanthe oenanthe*, one *Erithacus rubecula*, a couple of *Phylloscopus trochilus* and 2 *Tringa ochropus* completed the array of migratory birds.

All these common migrant species, on route between northern breeding grounds to wintering grounds on the African continent, often pause to refuel, and can concentrate in areas of suitable habitat and plentiful food.



Photo 1. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Ariant, Pollença,  
12<sup>th</sup> September 2020.  
Foto 1. Ull de bou boreal *Phylloscopus borealis*, Ariant, Pollença,  
12 de setembre de 2020.

The chance of finding unusual species mixing with the more typical is always possible and offers high motivation to observe carefully even the most familiar species. A small group of *Phylloscopus trochilus* working through the canopies of *Olea europea* and *Pistacia lentiscus* shrubs in the heat of the midday sun illustrated this perfectly. Checking through each lemon-yellow washed *Phylloscopus trochilus* as they searched for insects, a head bearing a distinctly different appearance peered through the leaves. A combination of long, slim and sharply demarcated supercilium, dark eye stripe, whitish throat and heavy, orange based bill meant that it stood out as different, and in fact it was possible to identify as *Phylloscopus borealis* even before seeing the rest of the bird! Following views of its greyish-white underparts marked by

weak greyish streaking across the breast, greyish, olive green upperparts and wings and the presence of a single white wing bar further assisted in identifying the bird beyond doubt. The bird's movements were distinctive, showing a slower, more laboured style of movement when compared to the light, flitting feeding action of the *Phylloscopus trochilus*. It was interesting to note how dramatically the bird's apparent plumage colours changed in different lighting conditions. When the bird was in full sunlight, reflected light from the green foliage gave the impression that the supercilium and underparts possessed a yellowish green hue. However, in shade the true coloration of these paler parts was revealed, being whitish grey and rather clean; an illustration of how judging a bird's plumage in difficult light conditions can be deceiving.

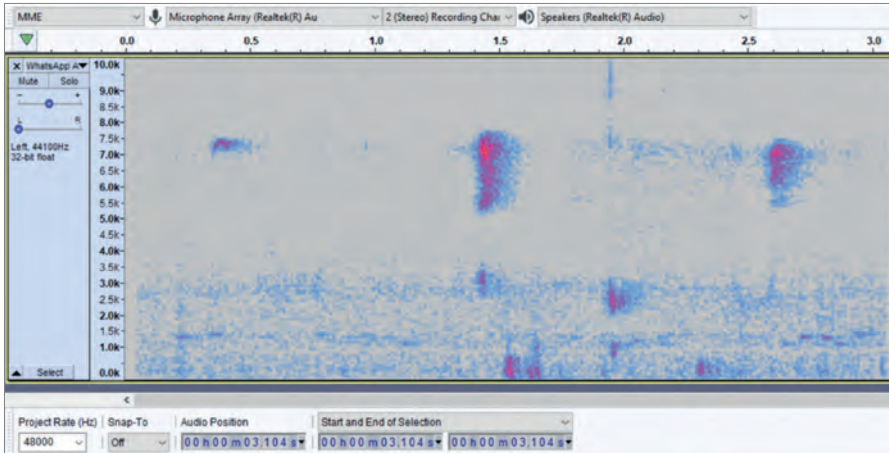


Figure 1. Sonogram of flight calls of Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Ariant (Pollença) on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Created using the audio software Audacity version 2.3.3.

Figura 1. Sonograma d'ull de bou boreal *Phylloscopus borealis*, Ariant (Pollença) el 12 de setembre de 2020. Creado con el software de audio Audacity versión 2.3.3

In addition to the bird's plumage features, a series of calls were recorded whilst capturing a short series of videos taken using a mobile phone held against binoculars (the telephoto lens was left at home today!) (Photo 1). These calls, heard as the bird took flight, are best described as single, sharp, almost electric 'zik' exclamations, very unlike any other *phylloscopus*, and characteristic of this species. From the sonogram, the short duration of the call, and the high frequency (topping at almost 8k Hz) are characteristic of this species (Figure 1), and help to discard the possibility of *Phylloscopus xanthodryas* (call frequency peaking around 5kHz) and *Phylloscopus examinandus* (a distinct double-call); both sister species of *Phylloscopus borealis*, and

considered as potential future vagrants to Europe (XENO-CANTO, 2021).

*Phylloscopus borealis* breeds from northern Scandinavia, east Siberia (excluding the Kamchatka Peninsula) and western Alaska, south to south central Siberia, northern Mongolia, and north-eastern China (north-eastern Nei Mongol and Heilongjiang). It winters from southeast Asia (Myanmar east to Vietnam), southeastern China (Fujian, northern Guangdong) and Taiwan south to the Philippines and Wallacea (CLEMENTS *et al.*, 2019).

This individual is the second to be recorded in Spain, after one in Jerez de la Frontera, Cadiz in 2008. Interestingly, on 16 October 2020, shortly after this bird, one was ringed at Doñana, Huelva; Spain's third record (ARROYO, 2020).

## REFERENCES

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