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BREVI NOTE / SHORT NOTES

ROLF NESSING

PROGRESSIVE GREYING IN A WOOD WARBLER (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) IN SICILY

On March 29, 2022, Jeremy D Budd (Tauton, UK) noticed an almost totally yellow songbird in the Saline Nature Reserve Priolo, north of Syracuse, Sicily. The bird was moving like a warbler through the bushes on the shore of the lake in search of food. The observation distance was only a few meters. A short time later, part of a group of British bird watchers, whom the author was leading on an ornithological tour of Sicily, were able to see the bird again. Unfortunately there was no photo of the yellow bird that day.

On April 5, 2022 the author returned to the Saline Nature Reserve Priolo leading a group of German bird watchers. Here Gaby Dienst (Neuenkirchen-Seelscheid, Germany), who was a member of this German group of bird watchers, managed to take some photos.



*Fig. 1* — Progressive Greying Wood Warbler, 5.4.2022 (Photo: G. Dienst).

Based on the pictures now available, the suspicion that it was a warbler was confirmed. Javier Blasco-Zumeta (Pina de Ebro, Spain) and colleagues confirmed the species diagnosis as Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).



Fig. 2 — Progressive Greying Wood Warbler, 5.4.2022 (Photo: G. Dienst).

The yellow plumage of this Wood Warbler is almost certainly the result of the progressive loss of melanin pigment. The melanin pigment in combination with the yellow carotenoid pigment causes the original greenish colour. Due to an aberration named Progressive Greying, this bird is losing more melanin with every moult but the carotenoid remains unaffected and therefore these parts of the plumage remain yellow. Flavistic is therefore an incorrect term as the yellow pigment does not increase but the melanin does decrease (VAN GROUW, 2021; Hein Van Grouw, *pers. comm.*).

#### REFERENCE

VAN GROUW H., 2021. What's in a name? Nomenclature for colour aberrations in birds reviewed. *Bull. B.O.C.*, 141(3): 276-299.

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