

BREVI NOTE / SHORT NOTES

ANDREA CORSO, LORENZO STARNINI & VERENA PENNA

UPDATE TO THE STATUS OF WESTERN RED-RUMPED SWALLOW
CECROPIS DAURICA RUFULA (TEMMINCK, 1835) (*Aves Hirundinidae*) IN SICILY

Aggiornamento dello status di Rondine rossiccia Cecropis daurica rufula (Temminck, 1835) (Aves Hirundinidae) in Sicilia

The Western Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica rufula* (Temminck, 1835) is considered a regular migrant and a scarce breeding bird in Sicily, with the first evidence of confirmed breeding obtained in 1995 near Vendicari (Siracusa) (CORSO, 2005). IENTILE & MASSA (2008) report 8 squares (10x10) where the species is breeding in Sicily (Fig. 1). Later, CUMBO (2014, 2015) added a single new station near Palermo. Finally, Duchi & Giampiccolo (2021) report the first breeding record for the Iblei Mountains (Ragusa province), far from the coastal area. Regarding its phenology in the region, both CORSO (2005) and BRICHETTI & FRACASSO (2007) consider more conspicuous the pre-breeding migration, usually from March to May (extreme February–June). Record number per season for Italy, according to the cited authors, consisted in 120 individuals counted at Capo Peloro, Messina (NE Sicily) and 235 at Capo d'Otranto, Lecce (SE Puglia) in March–April, while daily record count is of about 30-40 individuals per site in Sicily and Puglia. The entire Italian breeding population was estimated at 15-40 pairs by BRICHETTI & FRACASSO (2007). However, URSO & MINGOZZI (2009) found a breeding colony of 15-20 pairs in southern Calabria, increasing therefore of about 50% the Italian population estimated at the time. Our observations in Sicily from 2000 to 2020 update the status of this species, changing its phenology and the estimation for the whole Italian population. Not all sites reported in available literature were re-checked during our study, with most data in fact collected regularly on in the South-east of Sicily and scatterly/occasionally in other areas. Starting from the year 2000, scatter nesting sites were found in the province of Siracusa and Ragusa, where most nests were found near the town of Siracusa and around Portopalo di Capo Passero. An increasing number of nests was then recorded during 2013-2020, with nests found in at least 11 different sites (Fig. 1): Siracusa (2-4), Marzamemi (2), Vendicari/San Lorenzo (8-15), Portopalo di Capo Passero (2-4), Ragusa (1). The estimated total breeding pairs amounts to 14-25 per year, fluctuating yearly but tending towards an increasing. We know of 1-2 nests found irregularly also at Lipari, Filicudi and Vulcano Islands, and possibly at Salina Island, Eolian Archipelago (Messina) (MASSA *et al.* 2015; *pers. obs.*). Further, we found in 2017 and 2018 one breeding pair north of Lago Murana, Gorgi Tondi (Mazara del Vallo, Trapani) (37°38'13.1"N, 12°38'02.3"E) (Fig.1). Possibly even more interesting observation regards the migration period: we regularly observed by end of June to end of September, with peaks by end of July-mid August, 200-400+ individuals per season. The Red-rumped Swallows were counted at some roosting sites (generally in

reed-beds together with thousands of other hirundinids): 1) right at the back of Marzamemi village, on a small salt-pans marshland; 2) at Morghella Salt-Pans; 3) between Vendicari (Castelluccio) and San Lorenzo (all in the province of Siracusa). We counted no less than 80 birds together in July 2014 at Vendicari in a single evening, 110 in August 2015, from 30 to 100 at Vendicari/Castelluccio in July and August 2016 and again 40-150 in July–August 2017, a total of about 250+ were counted at a single roost at Marzamemi on early August 2018 and 2019, with a daily peak of about 150. Most of these birds arrived at roost by late evening-sunset, but flocks of 20-60 birds were resting the whole day round at Vendicari/San Lorenzo in June-September, where we found 8-15 breeding pairs in 2017-2019 in a deserted touristic village, fenced but abandoned. The number of birds observed, and the regularity of the observations, leads us now to believe that: 1) the phenology of the species in Italy should be changed, considering the post-breeding movements as by far more relevant than the pre-breeding one; 2) the origin of the birds observed in south-eastern Sicily remains unknown, a part that of the local breeding birds and their offspring. In fact, given an updated estimation number of 80-100 breeding pairs in Italy (this paper), and a breeding success of an average of 3 juv./pair (BRICHETTI & FRACASSO, 2007), this would mean that the Italian population is yearly of about 320-400 ind. This figure is similar to the total number observed in the sole province of Siracusa every summer-autumn. The possible answer should be: a) the breeding population of Italy is bigger by a vast number of undiscovered pairs; b) a good number of birds from Balkans migrate south-west toward and through south-eastern Sicily instead of flying south/south-east towards Greece and Tracia. Of course, further future researches should be made to get a clearer figure.

REFERENCES

- BRICHETTI P. & FRACASSO G., 2007. Ornitologia Italiana. 4. Apodidae-Prunellidae. *A. Perdisa*, Bologna, 441 pp.
- CUMBO G., 2014. Nidificazione di rondine rossiccia *Cecropis daurica* (Laxmann, 1769) in provincia di Palermo. *Naturalista sicil.*, 38: 389-390.
- CUMBO G., 2015. Doppia nidificazione della Rondine rossiccia *Cecropis daurica* (Laxmann, 1769) (*Aves Hirundinidae*) In Sicilia. *Naturalista sicil.*, 39: 433-434.
- DUCHI, A. & GIAMPICCOLO, M. 2021. Primo sito di nidificazione di Rondine rossiccia *Cecropis daurica* (Laxmann, 1769) (*Aves Hirundinidae*) negli Iblei (Valle del Tellesimo, Ragusa-Siracusa). *Naturalista sicil.*, 45: 269-273.
- IENTILE R. & MASSA B., 2008. Uccelli (*Aves*). Pp. 115-211 in: AA.VV., Atlante della biodiversità della Sicilia: Vertebrati terrestri. *ARPA Sicilia*, Palermo.
- MASSA B., LO CASCIO P., IENTILE R., CANALE E. & LA MANTIA T., 2015. Gli uccelli delle isole circumsiciliane. *Naturalista sicil.*, 39 (2): 105-373.
- URSO S. & MINGOZZI T., 2009. “Colonia” riproduttiva di Rondine rossiccia *Cecropis daurica* in un borgo disabitato in Aspromonte (Calabria). Pp. 145-147 in: Atti XV Conv. ital. Orn., *Atula*, 16 (1-2).

Authors' address — A. CORSO, Via Camastra, 10 – 96100 Siracusa (SR) (I); email: zoologywp@gmail.com; L. STARNINI, Via Cavour, 71 – 06019 Umbertide (PG) (I); V. PENNA, Via di S.M. dell'Anima, 62 - 00185 Roma (I).

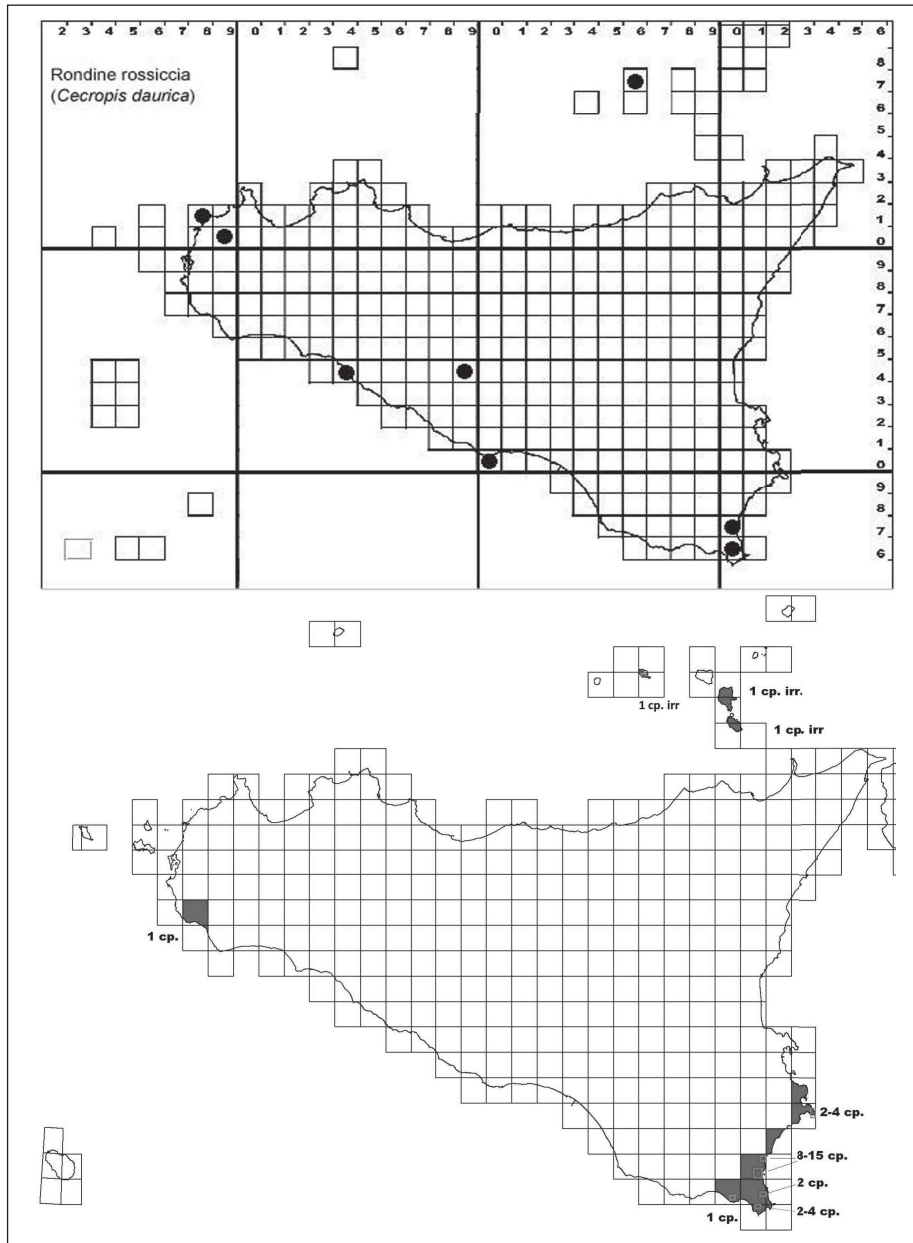


Fig. 1 — Above: distribution of the Western Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica rufula* (Temminck, 1835) in Sicily according to IENTILE & MASSA (2008). Below: distribution of the studied sites by the authors during the period 2000-2020 (sites known from literature were not checked). In black the breeding range, with the number of breeding pairs within the areas. Little squares indicate the localization of the monitored roosting sites.

