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## On records of the Pine Bunting, *Emberiza leucocephalos*, in Turkey from the last century

by Max Kasparek

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### 1. Introduction

KUMERLOEVE (1961) did not include the Pine Bunting in his avifauna of Turkey as he assumed that no proof was available. He cited ROBSON and ALLÉON who reported the species from the İstanbul area but he wrote "as nothing about proofs has become known, this species cannot be included in the list of the birds of Anatolia." However, KUMERLOEVE included the Pine Bunting in his "revised list of the birds of Turkey" (KUMERLOEVE 1966a) with the addition "one specimen 1858". On the other hand, he did not mention the species in a paper on supplements to the Turkish avifauna which was published at the same time (KUMERLOEVE 1966b). So, the situation is rather unclear, especially as KUMERLOEVE did not give any details on date, locality or museum of the specimen from 1858. For this reason, the literature regarding *Emberiza leucocephalos* in Turkey was re-checked and data referring to museum specimens were compiled.

## 2. Literature records

ELWES & BUCKLEY (1870) wrote about the species ("*Emberiza pityornis*, Pall."): "Occurs in winter in the Bosphorus, but is not common. We obtained two specimens from Mr. Robson." KRÜPER & HARTLAUB (1873) probably refer to this paper, when they wrote "According to ROBSON, sometimes at the Bosphorus during winter." So far, KUMERLOEVE (1961) apparently has used the literature and did not accept a record. However, specimens collected by ROBSON are also listed by DRESSER (1871): Two came into the private collection of DRESSER which were collected "near Constantinople", one of them being shot on 21 October. A further specimen, labelled with "Constantinople", came into the collection of TRISTRAM and another one, collected at Ortaköy ("Ortakenny") Hills, nowadays a quarter of İstanbul, into the collection of Lord WALDEN.

ALLÉON's statement on the occurrence of the Pine Bunting ("*Emberiza esclavonica* Degland.") at İstanbul is in fact insufficient and it is not surprising that KUMERLOEVE did not accept it as a record. ALLÉON only wrote: "sometimes on passage in autumn". However, ALLÉON might also be referring to ROBSON.

KUMERLOEVE (1961) did not make use of a further reference on the Pine Bunting in Turkey. MATHEY-DUPRAZ (1922) mentioned one female in the collection of the American College (Robert College) at İstanbul. Details on locality and date are not available, but the collecting site should be İstanbul or its surroundings, like most of the birds which were in that collection.

## 3. Museum specimens

Inquiries for skins from Turkey at the museums of New York (American Museum of Natural History) and Chicago (Field Museum of Natural History) were without success: no skins from Turkey are available there. However, one specimen is present in the collection of the British Museum (Natural History). It is a male and was collected at Ortaköy ("Ortakenny") on 31.10.1865 by T. ROBSON (B.M. 1888.9.12.524). Furthermore, the species was found in the museum of Robert College at İstanbul:

A male is apparently in winter plumage. The throat is chestnut and distinctly limited by a cream-coloured band on the breast. The belly has chestnut spots and stripes. The crown-feathers are white, but have black tips, so that the general appearance is dark. That type of feathers is typical for the winter plumages of many buntings. The tips are abraded and only the white parts of the feathers remain until spring (change of colouration without moulting!). Wing-length of that specimen is 92.5 mm. A further skin in that collection is apparently a female of the species. The throat is light-coloured with thin

brown stripes. Not being separated by a light area as in the male, the breast and belly has a chestnut band of thin stripes. As no comparison with other female buntings could be made, species identification should be confirmed later.

#### 4. Discussion

From the above listed references and museum specimens, correct species identification is beyond doubt. DRESSER (1871) published a detailed description (in Latin) of the winter plumage of this species based on a Turkish bird. Furthermore, DRESSER received a note on the occurrence of the Pine Bunting at the Bosphorus by ROBSON which shall be repeated here: "This species is very rare in Turkey, Asia Minor, and Europe, and I have never seen more than two or three in a season; some seasons none occur. They feed and are taken amongst other species of Emberizidae in the autumn migration; and amongst hundreds of other Buntings that are captured, only one or two of this species are met with. The female is a plain-coloured bird, much greyer than the male."

The two specimens in the collection of Robert College at Istanbul are without label. Only the name of the species is attached both skins. Unfortunately, we know little about the history of that collection. A list of the skins was included in MATHEY-DUPRAZ's (1922) avifauna of Istanbul. Since that time, little seems to have changed. Most of the skins are still available and no new ones have been added. All specimens were apparently collected in the surroundings of Istanbul before about 1924.

From the above cited references it becomes clear that the Pine Bunting appeared at least several times in the Istanbul area during the last century, but little is known on the dates of the records. In one case, we know that a specimen was collected on 21 October. Another specimen was collected on 31 October 1865. ROBSON was resident in Istanbul at least from 1861 to 1871 and all dates (including those at Robert College?) must therefore be within this period. From this century, there is only one record from Turkey: J. R. TAYLOR saw three males and three females on the campus of the Middle East Technical University at Ankara on 13.3.74 (pers. comm. and BIRD REPORT 1976-81).

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