

Notes on possible Eastern Black Redstart at Hogston Farm, Maidens, south Ayrshire (13-16/11/18)

During the morning of Tuesday 13/11/18 Angus Hogg (RHH) saw and photographed an unusual looking Black Redstart at Hogston Farm, near Maidens, south Ayrshire. Reviewing the image on the computer it was apparent that this was not a 'normal' Western type Black Redstart. The rufous orange belly and the apparent contrasting breast band suggested further investigation of this bird was required, as this bird may be of an eastern form. The bird was not seen again until Friday 16/11/18. The bird appeared on the wood pile at approximately 1145hrs and Dave Grant (DG) watched and photographed it for approximately 1 hour 20 minutes. Further visits were made on 17-19/11/18 by DG and RHH but there was no sign of the bird.



First image of unusual Black Redstart (RHH)

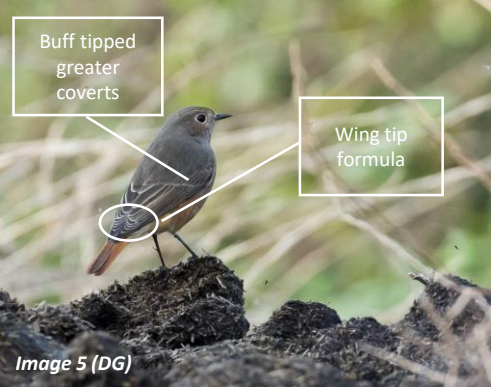


Image 5 (DG)

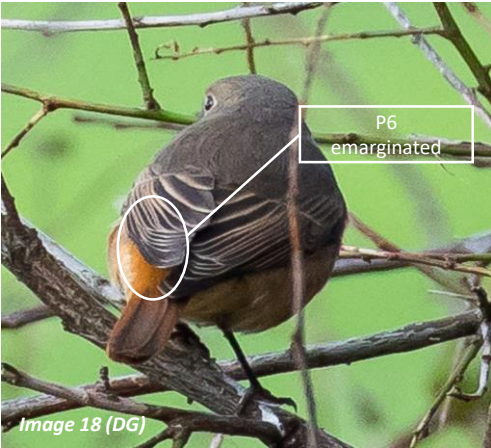


Image 18 (DG)



Image 6 (DG)



Image 12 (DG)

The above was part of a submission to BBRC for consideration as a non-paradoxus 1st winter male Eastern Black Redstart ssp *phoenicuroides*.

So why a Black Redstart?

It did have a Redstart feel about it and superficially one of the images (image 5) looked like images of Ehrenberg's Redstart in Shirihai & Svensson (pp265-266, 2018), however, wing formula discounted this. Wingtip = P5 (see image 5) & P4 = P6 (see image 13). The difference between P5 – P6 appeared less than half of distance between P6 - P7, therefore, according to Van Duivendijk (2011), this is unlikely to be hybrid Common X Black Redstart (see image 5 & 13).

Why Eastern Black Redstart?

Underwing coverts = orangey rufous (see image 17). Dark border on breast below median coverts (see image 11 & 12). Belly = Orangey rufous (see image 6, 11 & 12). P6 looks emarginated (see image 18). Head, hood, mantle & Scapulars = mousey grey (see image 9 & 5). White wing panel was indistinct as reported in Shirihai & Svensson (2018) for ssp *phoenicuroides* (see image 5). The tone of the grey colour of head, breast and back is even and paler than expected for ssp *semirufus* & *ochrurus*. Based upon this feature this bird may have been ssp *phoenicuroides*.

Why 1st winter male (non-paradoxus)?

Primaries & secondaries = Buff tinged. Greater coverts = buff tipped (see image 5). Vent = whitish whilst this may suggest a Redstart hybrid there is evidence from Birding Frontiers (2011) that white vent do occur in this species.

Amount of orange/rufous on belly (see image 6, 11 & 12) suggests a male rather than a female. Pronounced eye ring is a feature reported (Svensson 1992) for female eastern subspecies, particularly *phoenicuroides*, a feature also seen in non-paradoxus 1st winter males (Clement & Rose 2015; Shirihai & Svensson 2018) (image 5, 8, 9, 11, 12 & 13). Face to breast, including chin and lores, pale buff tipped blackish feathers. Buff tips to wear away pre-summer exposing darker feathers. This adds to the non-paradoxus 1st winter male determination.



Image 13 (DG)



Image 17 (DG)



Image 11 (DG)



Image 9 (DG)

Verdict

Whilst the BBRC were impressed with the submission (and actually felt that it was likely to be an Eastern), they felt that it was unlikely to be provable without access to DNA analysis. Also the ratio between p6-7:p5-6 was felt to be within, albeit slightly, the range for a possible hybrid, therefore a hybrid could not be ruled out. With this information BBRC committee had to classify the record as **Not Proven**.

Take Home Lesson - When confronted with a potentially rare species, take lots of photos but above all collect the pooh for DNA analysis!

References & Bibliography

Birding Frontiers (2011) Eastern Black Redstart: 1st winter male *phoenicuroides* <https://birdingfrontiers.wordpress.com/2011/11/21/eastern-black-redstart/> [accessed on 17/11/18]
Clement, P. & Rose, C. (2015) *Robins and Chats*, Christopher Helm: London
Shirihai, H. & Svensson, L. (2018) *Handbook of Western Palearctic Birds Volume 1 Passerines: Larks to Warblers*, Christopher Helm: London
Svensson, L. (1992) *Identification Guide to European Passerines (4th Edition)*, BTO
Van Duivendijk, N. (2011) *Advanced Bird ID Handbook: The Western Palearctic*, New Holland