The case of historical breeding of Black-Bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) in Central Europe

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Abstract: Black-Bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), is a species breeding in the arctic tundra; in Europe only in Siberian peninsulas on the Russian territory. There is not enough evidence about its historical breeding in Central Europe. Jan Pícha discovered the breeding of Black-Bellied Plover somewhere in Budějovice basin in south Bohemia, possible in the years 1906-1926, possible on the ponds Dvořiště or Volešek. He wrote about it to M. Záleský (visited) and J. Jirsík (in correspondence), and this report has been totally forgotten. Quite approved is Pícha's record of Spotted Redshank's (*Tringa erythropus*) breeding; Pícha's personality and reliability ensure the correctness of his report. Mating behaviour of Black-Bellied Plover, recorded in South Bohemia also in 1993.

Key words: Black-Bellied Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola*, historical breeding, Central Europe, Budějovice basin, southern Bohemia, Czech Republic, Jan Pícha

Introduction

Black-bellied Plover, *Pluvialis squatarola* (Linnaeus, 1758) is a species found in the arctic tundra but also widespread on the shore of the North Arctic Ocean, in Alaska, Canada, and Russia (Messange & Taylor 2005; O'Brien *et al.* 2006; Thompson & Byrkjedal 2011). In Europe it breeds solely on the islands Vaygach and Kolguev, not in Northern Europe (Iso-Ivari 1976); on the border of Eurasia, in the west of White Sea, in Russian peninsulas Yamal, Gydan, and Taymyr. Partly it spends winter on the shores of western Africa up to the Gulf of Guinea, but also along Greece, in the eastern Mediterranean, in eastern and southern Africa, in south-eastern India, Malaysia, Australia, and in South America (Anonymus *s. d.*, a,b; Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1975; Serra *et al.* 2001; BirdLife International 2016). In Central Europe it is quite plentiful during the spring and autumn migration period, but it is very rare on the northern shore in winter and summer; there is no evidence about its breeding (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1975; Hudec & Šťastný 2005). It spent summers here but did not nest: possible breeding in Germany in Thuringia in 18th century (Borkhausen 1797), according to von Homeyer (1872) and Schmiedeknecht (1906) a individual pair might have bred in Germany. More concrete in Lower Saxony, in the former principality Oldenburg (coordinate: 53°8'38"N, 8°12'50"E) individual pairs were on June 12, 1854 (von Negelein 1853; Wiepken 1854); along Borggreve (1869: 109) but highly improbable. Definite proof about breeding is missing.

Breeding of Black-Bellied Plover in southern Bohemia

Black-Bellied Plover migrated through southern Bohemia already in the 19th century, which is documented (von Dalla-Torre & von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen 1890; Michel 1892; von Schaeck 1892; Baťa 1933; Hora 1983; Mlíkovský 2004; Čeněk 2006; Pakandl 2014; Kloubec *et al.* 2015, Mikeš *in litt.*). But forgotten is the case of its breeding. Záleský (1927) visited Pícha's collection in 1924, and wrote about Black-Bellied Plover: "more specimen, one shot to nest!".

Jan Pícha sent a report in correspondence to Josef Jirsík about breeding (not about perhaps or probably) but without any further information or date in a letter from 1926: "I have a lot of things to say, mainly concerning breeding in our area (I'll name only *Totanus fuscus*, *Squata-*

rola helvetica, Rose-coloured Starling, etc.)" (Jirsík 1955: 95). 1/ *Squatarola helvetica* is identical with *Pluvialis squatarola* (Trouessart 1912: 371). In J. Pícha's collection there were two adult specimen and a one juvenile from the ponds Volešek and Dvořisko (Sýkora & Mayer 1931); according to Baťa (1933), another one juvenile from this area also from 1916. In the Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice there are these specimen under inventory numbers ZV 148, ZV 149, and ZV 150, without record's data (Fig. 1, 2). Concerning the last two specimen, they were juvenile or birds in the first year of their lives, after partial moulting (Mikeš *in litt.*). Pícha gave one specimen to the National Museum in Prague in 1906 (Mlíkovský 2004); that all - everything also as physical testimony Pícha's knowledge of this species. Preserved evidence witnesses to the fact that Pícha recognized the Black-Bellied Plover very well. Although the data are not complete, it is possible to think that the Black-Bellied Plover breeding in the Budějovice basin, possible on the pond Dvořiště (coordinate: 49°3'54"N, 14°39'47"E; area 337 ha) in the north-west from Třeboň, or pond Volešek (coordinate: 49°4'5"N, 14°18'16"E; area 134,4 ha) near Plástovice and in the vicinity of Sedlec near České Budějovice, where Pícha's collection is located between the years 1906-1926. In 1912 Pícha was supposed to have "located a male of the Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas, 1764), which has led the juvenile" on the pond Velký Hájský in Dubné (coordinate: 48°58'35"N, 14°21'37"E) in southern Bohemia; publication priority belong of Jirsík (1935: 497; 1955: 95; Hudeček 2017), not Mlíkovský (2004). This record is quite accepted as the only evidence from the whole Central Europe (Pakandl 2013; Kloubec *et al.* 2015). Considerate Pícha, authority on waders (Cerha & Pícha 1931), might have let the Black-Bellied Plover to lead out the juvenile and only then he shot it to death (see of Spotted Redshank, Mlíkovský 2004). The described case of forgotten breeding is backed up by observation of a pair of Black-Bellied Plover during mating behaviour and mating on the pond Koclířov (coordinate: 49°4'9"N, 14°41'37"E, area 192 ha), to the southwest of Lomnice nad Lužnicí. This happened between June 7 and 11, 1993 (Pakandl 2014; Kloubec *et al.* 2015). Other May, June and July observations of individuals were made in southern Bohemia (summary of Hora 1983; Pakandl 2014; Kloubec *et al.* 2015) and in other places in the Czech Republic during the breeding period: in western Bohemia in 2015 (Anonymus 2015), eastern Bohemia in 1994 (Kadava *et al.* 2011), southern Moravia in 2007 (Macháček 2012; Sychra *et al. s. d.*) and central Moravia (Polčák in Šírek 2002). According to Pakandl (2014), the spring migration finished in the Czech Republic at the beginning of June and Black-Bellied Plovers stay here during July only very rarely.

Jan Pícha (1872-1930)

An ophthalmologist, amateur ornithologist and taxidermist, beside Karel Bartuška, the first ornithologist in České Budějovice from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries until 1930s (Hudec 1999; Kloubec *et al.* 2015). He was considered to be an expert in natural sciences and an absolutely reliable ornithologist (Záleský 1927; 1930; Jirsík 1955; Mlíkovský 2004). Pícha probably observed of the European Mink, *Mustela lutreola* (Linnaeus, 1761), on ponds in environment of the České Budějovice (Záleský 1930). He made his observation in the environments of České Budějovice unfortunately he did not write down his experience. Nevertheless, he was quoted by important personalities of Czech ornithology and zoology as Karel Kněžourek, Václav Vávra, Jiří Janda, Josef Jirsík, and mostly Miloš Záleský (Kněžourek 1912; Janda 1926; Jirsík 1935; 1955; Záleský 1927). He bequeathed his bird collection to the City Museum in České Budějovice (today's Museum of South Bohemia), and gifts to National Museum in Prague, but without any accompanying written documentation (Cerha & Pícha 1931; Mlíkovský 2004). The collection counted 233 birds and 110 species (Baťa 1933; Sýkora & Mayer 1931; Mikeš *s. d.*). Some data can be found in literature.

Fig 1-2: Black-Bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*): collection of Jan Pícha, without locate and data, probably Budějovice basin (inventory number ZV 150, Museum of South Bohemia in České Budějovice). Photo Václav Mikeš.

Summary

This article describes the case of breeding of the Black-Bellied Plover, for sure in southern Bohemia somewhere in the Budějovice basin, possible between 1906 and 1926 (Záleský 1927; Jirsík 1955). This case was mentioned by J. Pícha, a reliable personality and bird expert, in his correspondence with J. Jirsík, and personal contact with M. Záleský. Pícha might not have led any written records but in his collection he had documentary specimen, which shows that he recognized this species very well. This record has been totally forgotten although it presents the only direct statement about the species breeding in Central Europe.

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Notes

Ad 1: Literal text of Záleský (1927) in Czech: "Kulíka bledého (více exem., jeden střelen na hníždě !)".

Ad 2: Literal text of Jirsík (1955: 95). "I have many thing's, mainly recorded case's of breeding at our area (at random name only *Totanus fuscus*, *Squatarola helvetica*, Rose-coloured Starling etc.). In Czech: "Přímě o hníždění bohužel bez bližších údajů, napsal autorovi (= J. Jirsíkovi) v dopisu bez data r. 1926, absolutně spolehlivý budějovický ornitolog Dr. Jan Pícha (zemřel r. 1930). Cituji doslova: "...mám mnoho věcí, hlavně zjištěné případy hníždění u nás ptáků (namátkou jmenuji jen *Totanus fuscus*, *Squatarola helvetica*, růžového špačka, atd.)"

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