

Notes

Citril finch (*Serinus citrinella*) populations at the north of the Pyrenees may winter in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula

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At the North of the Pyrenees, the Citril finch *Serinus citrinella* has been traditionally considered as a short-distance and vertical migrant, with birds wintering at middle altitude (> 1,000 m a.s.l.), although that heavy snowfall can force Citril finches to move lower temporarily (MÄRKI, 1976; DEJONGHE, 1991; CRAMP & PERRINS, 1994; GLUTZ & BAUER, 1997; SNOW & PERRINS, 1998). Well documented movements refer to French, Swiss and German birds which winter in mountainous areas of southern France (mostly at the east of Cévennes and at the south of Mont Ventoux) (MÄRKI, 1976; BEZZEL & BRANDL, 1988; DEJONGHE, 1991; CRAMP & PERRINS, 1994; ZINK & BAIRLEIN, 1995).

However, there is an old record of an Alpine Citril finch originally ringed in Col de Bretolet (Switzerland) on June 1959 which was recovered in Sallent (Barcelona, NE Spain) on October 1959 (Table 1) (SCHIFFERLI, 1961; CRAMP & PERRINS, 1994; ASENSIO, 2004). This recovery matched with the observation, in the same winter, of an important Citril finch migratory movement along the eastern Pyrenees (BOURRILLON, 1961). This information, together with a personal communication from Spanish ornithologists of an increase in the number of wintering Citril finches in southern Spain and some additional anecdotal information, lead MÄRKI (1976) to suggest that an unknown fraction of birds at the north of Pyrenees may winter in mountainous areas at the south of Spain. Recently, BENOIT & MÄRKI (2004) have reported the abundant presence of wintering Citril finches in this area, which has lead them to suggest the importance of southern Spain for the wintering of Citril fin-



Citril Finch / Venturon montagnard (*Serinus citrinella*), Sierra de Guadarrama (Espagne), 20.05.2005. H. MICHEL (www.oiseaux-nature.com).

ches native from the north of the Pyrenees. However, all data presented are based on visual observations, so that the real origin of the birds could not be ascertained.

Here we provide data on two recaptures of Citril finches native from the Rhône-Alpes (France) which have been recovered during winter in Catalonia (NE Spain) (Table 1). Details from the old record outlined before is also provided in the table. Bird 641964 was ringed on 13.11.1993 in



Fig. 1 - Main localities mentioned in the text. - Principaux lieux cités dans le texte.

Solsona and was recovered in loco on 19.02.1994, which may confirm that the bird was wintering in central Catalonia and was not just crossing the area in migration. Bird 4429564 was originally ringed on 29.03.2003 at Vallon de Combeau (France), recovered breeding *in loco* on 21.06.2003, controlled on 14.12.2003 at Solsona (NE Spain), and recovered again on 25.05.2004 at Vallon de Combeau, which strongly suggests we are dealing with a French breeder bird that moved to NE Spain to winter. The two recaptures provided have been obtained from a total of 938 Citril finches ringed in SE France (Vercors mountain) by S. Blache during

the breeding period (April-September) from 1998 to 2003 and from a total of 1.877 birds ringed during winter (November-February) in NE Spain (Solsonès-Berguedà plains) by A. Borrás *et al.* from 1984 to 2003. There is an additional old recovery of a breeding Swiss bird (for which the ring number is not available) that was recaptured wintering in NE Spain, but for which details are unfortunately missing, and hence has not been included in the table (BERNIS & BERNIS, 1963).

Our data from ringed and recaptured birds confirm that Citril finches from the north of the

Table 1 - Data on ringed Citril finches interchanged between the populations at the north and the south of the Pyrenees. - Données de Venturons montagnards bagués ayant transité entre le nord et le sud des Pyrénées.

Ring #	Date ringed	Locality	Date Recovered	Locality	Distance	Author
444.781 Sempach	25/06/1959	Col de Bretolet 46°09'N 06°47'E	25/10/1959	Sallent (Barcelona) 41°50'N 01°50'E	625 Km SW	(SCHIFFERLI, 1961; Asensio, 2004)
641964 ICONA	13/11/1993 recovered 19/02/1994 <i>in loco</i>	Solsona (Lerida) 42°00'N 01°31'E	20/06/1995	Col du Rousset (Chamaloc) 44°48'N 05°23'E	440 Km NE	This paper
4429564 Museum Paris	29/03/2003 recovered 21/06/2003 25/05/2004 <i>in loco</i>	Vallon de Combeau 44°44'N 5°33'E	14/12/2003	Solsona (Lerida) 42°00'N 01°31'E	445 Km SW	This paper

Pyrenees may winter in NE Spain. This data and that from the north of Italy (FORNASARI *et al.*, 1998), suggests that a proportion of the Citril finches north of the Pyrenees is truly migratory, with (at least) two migratory routes: one SW crossing the Pyrenees to Spain, the other SE through Italy. The reports of at least nine observations and captures of Citril finches in the Balearic Islands, where the species only appears in winter, additionally supports the sometimes migratory character of the species (FERRER, 1986; CLAVELL, 2002); although no recoveries are available, FERRER (1986) suggested the possible Alpine origin of these birds.

The two birds were recaptured in high plains at about 600-800m a.s.l., in typical Citril finch wintering areas from NE Spain, in ruderal and arvense communities in farmland and fragmented forests of Black Pine *Pinus nigra* and Pubescent Oak *Quercus pubescens*. Hence, our typical Citril finch wintering areas contrast with that found by BENOIT & MÄRKI (2004) in southern Spain, located in Scotch pine *Pinus sylvestris* forests in high (about 2,000 m a.s.l.) mountainous areas. We would like to point out here in relation to the observations of BENOIT & MÄRKI (2004), that given the lack of recaptured birds for which the origin is known, a more parsimonious hypothesis to explain the origin of observed wintering Citril finches in southern Spain is that

these birds belonged to the native breeding population of Sierra Morena-Betic System (BORRAS & SENAR, 2003), adjacent to the reported wintering areas. Genetic data and studies on stable isotopes will confirm what is the proportion of transpyrenean Citril finches wintering in NE Spain, and the true origin of wintering birds found in the south of Spain.

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SUMMARY - Citril finch (*Serinus citrinella*) populations at the north of the Pyrenees may winter in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula

The Citril finch *Serinus citrinella* has been traditionally considered at the North of the Pyrenees, as a short-distance and vertical migrant. Recently it has been suggested that these birds could winter in high mountains in the south of Spain. This is based on the observation of some numbers of birds wintering in that area and on an old record of a Swiss bird being controlled in October 1959 in NE Spain, which had been assumed to be crossing the area. There is however no ringing data which confirms the origin of Citril finches wintering in the south of Spain. We think that a more parsimonious view is that birds observed wintering in the south of Spain belong to the Morena-Betic System breeder population, and that Alpine

birds, in an still unknown proportion, may winter in NE of Spain. In order to support this view, we provide data on two confirmed French breeders and two birds of Swiss origin, which were controlled during the winter in Solsona, Berguedà and Bages plains (Catalonia, NE Spain). One of the French birds was controlled within the same season in the same wintering area in Catalonia for two times (13rd November and 19th February), confirming that it was wintering there and not just crossing the area. Genetic and stable isotope data will confirm what is the proportion of transpyrenean Citril finches wintering in NE Spain, and the true origin of wintering birds found in the south of Spain

RÉSUMÉ- L'hivernage probable en Catalogne de Venturons montagnards (*Serinus citrinella*) nichant au nord des Pyrénées.

Le Venturon montagnard est traditionnellement considéré, au nord des Pyrénées, comme un migrateur vertical et à courte distance. Les mouvements bien documentés concernent des oiseaux français, suisses et allemands hivernant dans les zones montagneuses du sud de la France, comme les Cévennes et le sud du Mont Ventoux. Il a toutefois été suggéré récemment que ces oiseaux pouvaient hiverner dans le sud de l'Espagne. Cette hypothèse repose sur l'observation récente de Venturons hivernant en assez grand nombre dans cette région, et sur une donnée ancienne d'un oiseau d'origine suisse qui a été contrôlé en octobre 1959 dans le nord-est de l'Espagne, donc supposé traverser cette région.

Comme il n'y a, à ce jour, aucune donnée de baguage qui permette de déterminer l'origine géographique des Venturons hivernant dans le sud de l'Espagne, nous pensons qu'il est plus raisonnable de les rattacher à la population nicheu-

se locale. En revanche, nous sommes d'avis que des oiseaux originaires de l'arc alpin (France, Suisse, Allemagne...) hivernent en nombre inconnu dans le nord-est de l'Espagne. Cette dernière hypothèse est fondée sur l'ancienne mention citée ci-avant ainsi que sur deux données plus récentes qui concernent des Venturons nicheurs de la région Rhône-Alpes (France) qui ont été contrôlés pendant la saison hivernale (13.11 et 14.12) dans les plaines de Solsona et Berguedà en Catalogne. Le premier des deux a été capturé deux fois (13.11 et 19.02) au cours du même hiver et au même endroit, ce qui conforte l'hypothèse qu'il s'agissait bien d'un hivernant et non d'un migrateur.

Des analyses génétiques et isotopiques devraient permettre, d'une part, d'estimer la proportion de Venturons " trans-pyrénéens " hivernant dans le nord-est de l'Espagne et, d'autre part, de préciser l'origine exacte des oiseaux fréquentant en hiver les sierras du sud du pays.

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