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A female Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* without cap

J. L. COPETE & C. JORDÀ

Blackcaps Sylvia atricapilla *have the forehead and crown, or cap black or red-brown, according to the sex. However, on 14.07.90 at Vallvidrera (Barcelona, NE Spain), we trapped a female with the crown uniform olive brown, like the general colour of coverts. This is the first description of an anomaly of this kind.*

Key words: Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla*, aberrant plumage, plumage coloration.

José Luis Copete & Cristòfol Jordà. Museu de Zoologia. Ap. 593. 08080 Barcelona.
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Female Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* are unmistakeable in normal plumage, with their red-brown forehead and crown, which together with the brown-toned underparts and olive brown upperparts, make identification very easy. It can only be confused with the Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, which is similar in size, but in the hand this confusion is improbable, since it does not have a coloured crown, nor any other mark on the head. Other details like the inconspicous pale line over the eye, the pale brown ear-coverts, and the more robust appearance complete the essential field characters for a correct identification (Williamson 1976, Simms 1985, Berthold et al. 1990, Cramp 1992).

On 14th July 1990 an adult female Blackcap was trapped at Vallvidrera (Barcelona, NE Spain). This bird completely lacked any markings on the head. It was identified as a Blackcap by its wing formula (Svensson 1984), structure and morphology (Cramp 1992), and by the coloration of upperparts and underparts, which coincided with the typical pattern of Blackcaps breeding in this area. It showed remains of a ventral patch, indicating that the bird had bred in the area, which additionally eliminated the possibility of confusion with the Garden Warbler, since this species is absent from the area as a breeding bird. Therefore, the general characteristics of the plumage were normal, except for the absence of the reddish brown forehead and crown.

Aberrant plumages have been reported for the Blackcap (Koenig 1890 in Berthold et al. 1990, Trüb 1961/62, Aragüés 1974, Lambrechts 1980, Berthold et al. 1990). Most of the birds were albino or melanistic, and exceptionally they had abnormal marks or colours. There is, however, no previous record of a Blackcap without a cap.

This case alerts about the possibility of trapping Blackcaps without the normal colour

on the cap, which could produce a confusion, at first glance, with other warblers, especially with the Garden Warbler.•

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RESUMEN

Una hembra de Curruca capirotada* Sylvia atricapilla *sin capirote.

La curruca capirotada Sylvia atricapilla *es fácilmente identificable respecto a los miembros de tamaño similar de su género mediante la presencia del capirote, negro o marrón-rojizo según el sexo. Sin embargo, una hembra adulta sin capirote fue capturada el 14.07.90 en Vallvidrera (Barcelona). El color del píleo y frente era el mismo que el de las coberteras del dorso. A pesar de que han sido descritos plumajes aberrantes en esta especie, este es el primer caso en que la aberración consiste exclusivamente en la falta de capirote. Asimismo, este dato alerta a los anilladores sobre la posibilidad de capturar ejemplares que puedan confundirse con la Curruca mosquitera* Sylvia borin.

RESUM

Una femella de Tallarol de casquet* Sylvia *atricapilla sense casquet.

El tallarol de casquet Sylvia atricapilla *és fàcilment identificable respecte dels membres del seu gènere de mida similar mitjançant la presència del casquet, negre o marró-vermellós segons el sexe. Malgrat això, una femella adulta sense casquet fou capturada el 14.07.90 a Vallvidrera (Barcelona). El color del pili i front era el mateix que el de les cobertores del dors. Encara que s'han descrit plomatges aberrants en aquesta espècie, aquest és el primer cas en que l'aberració consisteix exclusivament en la manca de casquet. Així, aquesta dada alerta els anelladors sobre la possibilitat de capturar exemplars que es puguin confondre amb el Tallarol gros* Sylvia borin.

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