

## MALTA REPORTS THE FIRST ALBANIAN RING RECOVERY

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### ***Abstract***

*Through this paper, an important news on the bird ringing activity in our country is communicated. It is about an individual of the Wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) ringed by the Albanian Bird Ringing Scheme association in the village of Vishaj (Tirana), which was recovered in Malta, Melieha, Ghadira Nature Reserve. Data about ringed individual, were sent to the Maltese Center (Bird Life Malta), together with photographs of birds caught and ringed that day, including this individual of the Wood warbler. This case shades light to the migration route that was not known before. Referring to the dates of ringing and recovering, which correspond to the period of migration of migratory birds from wintering areas to nesting sites, we can figure out the migration route followed by this individual. We assume that after leaving the wintering area he arrived in Malta, one of the most important grounds for migratory birds, from there to Sicily, through Messina Strait towards southern Italy, and then he passed to Albania through the Strait of Otranto, to continue afterwards his way to the nesting site. The individual was ringed in the village of Vishaj (Tirana), on Sunday 17/04/2022, ringing time: 11:12, temp. 8°C-19°C. This village is situated in the Central Albania and is part of the Western Lowlands along the Erzeni River valley; it is an agricultural and livestock farming area with a diverse Flora and Fauna. This recovery is especially important for ornithology in Albania as it not only marks the first Albanian ring recovered outside of the country, but it also provides data on the species' migration route. Years of tenacious work from the Albanian Bird Ringing Scheme has finally yielded this scientific data.*

**Key words:** *Bird ringing, Recovering, Migration route, Migratory birds, Wood warbler.*

## **Përmbledhje**

Nëpërmjet këtij materiali raportohet një lajm i rëndësishëm mbi aktivitetin e unazimit të shpendëve në vendin tonë. Bëhet fjalë për gjetjen e një individi Fishkëllenjësi i madh (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) të unazuar nga Shoqata jonë në fshatin Vishaj – Tiranë, i cili është gjetur në Maltë, Melieha, Rezervati Natyror Ghadira. Në këtë komunikim jepen edhe të dhënat rreth unazimit, të cilat i janë dërguar edhe Qendrës Malteze, bashkë me fotot e disa prej shpendëve të kapur dhe të unazuar të asaj dite, ndër to edhe të individit të Fishkëllenjësit të madh.

Ky rast na njeh me rrugën e migrimit, që deri më parë nuk ishte e njohur. Duke iu referuar datave të unazimit dhe gjetjes, të cilat korrespondojnë me periudhën e largimit të shpendëve shtegëtarë nga zonat e dimërimit drejt vendeve folenizuese, mund të përcaktojmë rrugën që ka përshkruar ky individ. Mendojmë që pasi ka lënë zonën e dimërimit ka mbërritur në Maltë, një nga stacionet më të rëndësishëm për shpendët migrues, që andej në Siçili, në Mesina drejt Italisë së jugut, ka kaluar nga ngushtica e Otrantos në Shqipëri, për të vazhduar rrugën e tij drejt vendit të folenizimit. Individu u unazua në fshatin Vishaj-Tiranë, ditën e dielë, datë 17/04/2022, ora e unazimit: 11:12, temp. 8°C-19°C. Ky fshat ndodhet në Shqipërinë e Mesme, bënë pjesë në Ultësirën Perëndimore gjatë rrjedhës së lumit Erzen, vend bujqësor e blegtoral me një Florë dhe Faunë të larmishme.

Kjo gjetje ka një rëndësi të madhe për ne dhe ornitologjinë Shqiptare, sepse jo vetëm që është gjetja e parë e një unaze shqiptare jashtë kufijve të vendit, por vërteton rrugën e kalimit të kësaj specie. Ky informacion shkencor ka ardhur si rrjedhojë e një pune këmbëngulëse shumëvjeçare të Skemës Shqiptare të Unazimite (Albanian Bird Ringing Scheme).

**Fjalë kyçe:** Unazimi i shpendëve, Gjetje, Rruga e migrimit, Shpendë shtegëtarë, Fishkëllenjësi i madh

## **Introduction**

The Wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) is a small-sized bird of the order Passeriformes, family Phylloscopidae, included in the European faunistic category, but with limited nesting distribution. The entire population of this species winters in tropical Africa. In Albanian ornithology, this species is listed as a twice-passing bird, in spring and autumn.

Latin name: *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

English: **Wood warbler**

Albanian: Fishkëllyesi i madh (Lamani & Puzanov, 1963)

Local Names:

Fishkëllyesi gushëverdhë (Dani, 1965), Fishkëllyesi barkbardhë, Fishkëllyesi i gjethit, Çika, Çika e pyllit, Cerfiu.

Some of these names we also find in Albanian language dictionaries (Dictionary of the Albanian Language, 1954), (“Dictionary of Today's Albanian Language”, 1980).

### **Bioecology**

It is seen everywhere during migration in the spring period, from April to the beginning of May while during the autumn from August to the first half of September, from the lowlands of the coastal deciduous forests, including fruit tree plantations, Cercis forest areas of average heights, chestnut, oak and maple, up to 1500 meters, with beech and fir forests. Its preferred habitats are broad-leaved forest formations, accompanied by small streams and willows by the water's edge. Less common in pine and scrub wooded areas.

### **Distribution**

During our ornithological observations for the bird inventory, we encountered it in many areas of Albania, such as: in the reserves of Velipoja (Shkodër) and Kune (Lezhë), Dajti National Park (Tirana), Rrushkull (Durrës), Kryevidh (Kavajë), in the plantations with olive groves and fruit trees of Thanasaj village and in the forest area of Divjakë-Karavasta National Park (Lushnjë), Kryegjatë (Fier), Novoselë and Llogara National Park (Vlorë), Gramsh, Kolonjë, Leusë (Përmet) and Maliq (Korçë).

In the scientific collection of the Museum of Natural Sciences (MNS) in Tirana there are 10 specimens collected from these areas. The first specimen of the male sex was taken in the Zall-Sukaj forest (Lezhë), dated 6/04/1951, brought to the Museum by the Belarusian Vasili Puzanov, an employee of this institution, who has made an important contribution to Albanian ornithological science. While the male individual, exhibited in the halls of the MNS, was taken in Durrës in 1957, processed in the taxidermy laboratory by master Muhamet Shpati (Scientific fund of the Museum of Natural Sciences).

## Description

The largest of this family, the yellow color more pronounced than the other species, the green head and back give it the advantage of being well camouflaged among the leaves. The top of the head and the rump of the tail are lighter in color. The eye is cut transversely by a black stripe; above the eye is seen a thin fine eyebrow, delicate beak and legs, characteristic of insectivorous passerine birds. Yellow throat with shades towards white and white belly. Long flight and tail feathers are green, tinged with gray and some brown, with darker tips. Quite elegant and agile when moving from one branch to another, likes to show off and look proud, raises the short tail a little and hangs the arms down, which compared to the tail look longer; puffs the feathers to look bigger and more dominant (Delin & Svensson, 1989).

## Song

Not listed in songbirds; his repertoire consists of a simple melodic line, divided into two stages, first with low and medium notes Tjui-Tjui-Tjui-Tjuj-Wip-Wip-Wip, then by gill vibrations and with the beak fully open it emits more powerful long Vt-Vt-Vt-Terrrrrrrrrrrr. Song that repeats all the time, even when going from one place to another; he accompanies the flight with short calls Zip-Zip-Zip, to indicate his presence at any moment.

## Food

Insect eaters: its diet consists of insects and their larvae, which it persistently searches among the bark of trees and on the underside of leaves for spiders, hoverflies and mosquitoes of the order Diptera. During the spring season, it likes to consume soft mulberries (*Morus alba*), while in autumn it likes to feed on elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), currants (*Ribes rubrum*), strawberries (*Fragaria vesca*), raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*), blackberries (*Rubus fruticosus*), but also with the ripe fruits of the season (Colombo G. Monaco Nature, Encyclopedia).

**Status:** In Albania, it is not classified in the list of endangered bird species. The main protection measures for the species are preservation of habitats from erosion, indiscriminate exploitation, and protection of forest areas from fires in the summer season.

07/04/2023



### BIRDLIFE MALTA VALLETTA BIRD RINGING SCHEME

Please find details of a ring from your ringing scheme recovered in Malta. Please return the form with ringing details.

**Address:** Birdlife Malta, 57/28 Marina Court, Abate Rigord Street, Ta' Xbiex MSD 12, Malta

**E-mail:** [ringing@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:ringing@birdlifemalta.org)

#### METAL RING: TIRANA ALBANIA X22410 - Wood Warbler

RINGING DATA	
VERIFICATION OF RING	Albanian Bird Ringing Scheme (ABRS)
SPECIES	[13080] Wood Warbler – ( <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> )
SEX, AGE	Male, 2nd year
STATUS	Least Concern (LC)
DATE, TIME, ACCURACY	17/04/2022 11:12, [0] – Accurate to the day
PLACE	Albania, Tirana, Vishaj village
COORDINATES	41.270617, 19.810503 (41°16'14.2"N 19°48'37.8"E)
COORDINATES ACCURACY	Accurate to the ringer co-ordinates
CONDITION	[8] – Alive and probably healthy and released by a ringer
CIRCUMSTANCES	[20] – Ringing Session, No Doubt about Circumstance
BIOMETRICS	Wing Length: 76 mm, Fat: 3, Weight: 11g
RINGER	GRIGOR JORGO, Albanian Bird Ringing Scheme
COMMENTS	353 calendar days - Distance: 756.587 km

RECOVERY DATA	
VERIFICATION OF RING	[1] – Ring verified by scheme
SPECIES	[13080] Wood Warbler – ( <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> )
SEX, AGE	[U] – Unknown, [4] – after 1st year
STATUS	[U] – Unknown
DATE, TIME, ACCURACY	04/04/2023 10:00, [0] – Accurate to the day
PLACE	[ML00], Malta, Mellieha, Ghadira Nature Reserve
COORDINATES	35.970307, 14.348889 (35°58'13.1"N 14°20'56.0"E)
COORDINATES ACCURACY	[0] – Accurate to the given co-ordinates
CONDITION	[8] – Alive and probably healthy and released by a ringer
CIRCUMSTANCES	[20] – Ringing Session, No Doubt about Circumstance
BIOMETRICS	Wing Length: 76 mm, Fat: 1, Muscle: 1, Weight: 8.6g
RINGER	DAVID ATTARD, BIRDLIFE MALTA
COMMENTS	-

07/04/2023



**Figure 1.** The information data about Ringing and Finding  
(As received from Bird Life Malta)

**Data on the Wood warbler's (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) ringing and recapture**

Figure 1 offers comprehensive data regarding the Wood warbler that was caught, ringed, and later recovered by Maltese colleagues. Figure 2 shows a picture of the bird that was taken following the ring placement.



**Figure 2.** Wood warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

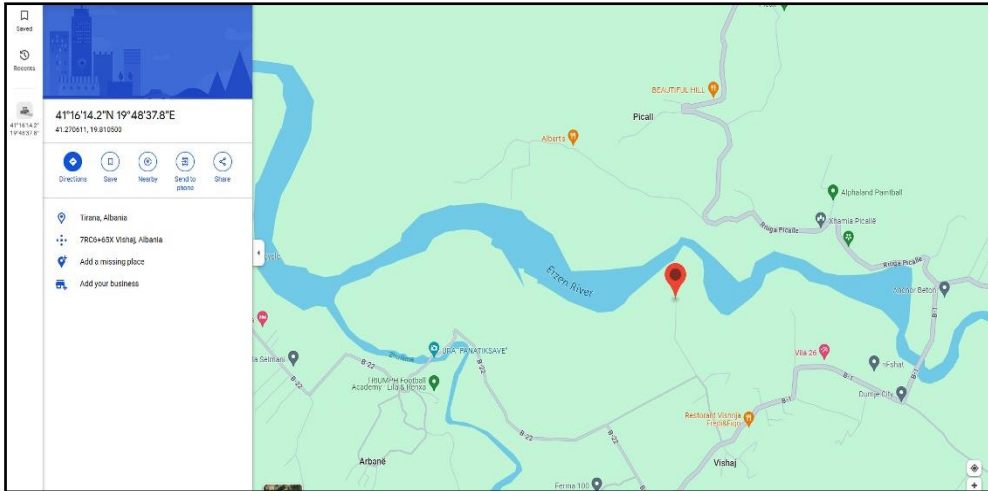
Figures 3 shows other bird species that were collected and ringed on the same day as the Wood warbler, and Figures 4 shows views of the area used for the ringing. The geographic coordinates of the ringing are displayed in Figure 5, and the distance from the ringing site to the recapture site, as reported by the ringed Wood warbler individual, is shown in Figure 6.



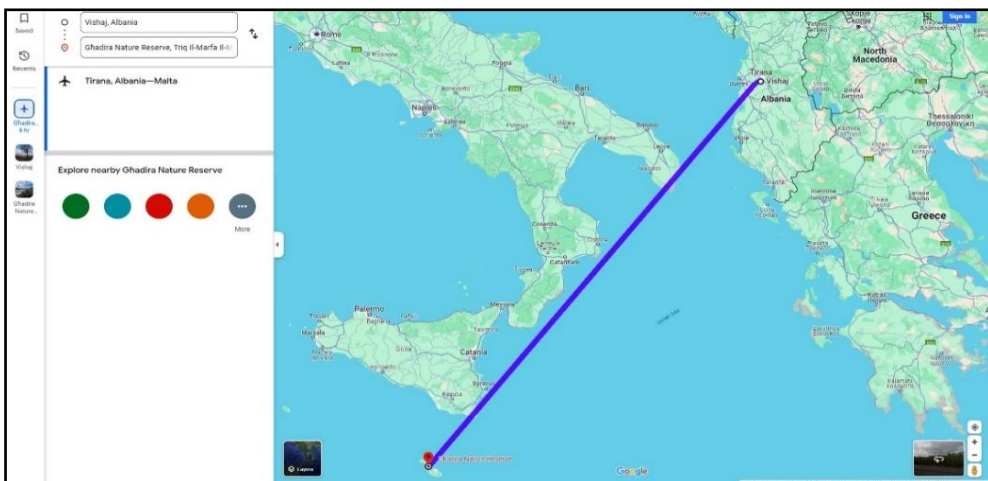
**Figures 3.** Other birds ringed that day



**Figures 4.** View from the ringing site habitat



**Figure 5.** Ringing site coordinates: 41.270617, 19.810503 (41°16'14.2"N 19°48'37.8"E) Photo: google maps



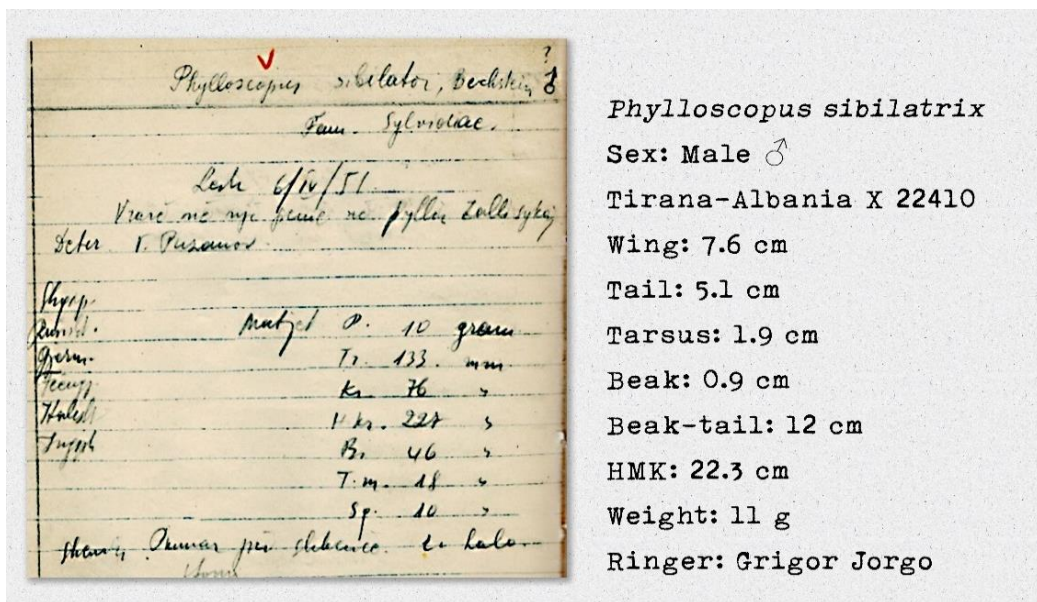
**Figure 6.** Distance as the bird flies from the place of ringing to the place of recovery: 756,587 km. Time spent: 353 calendar days (Foto: google maps)





**Figure 7.** The bird recovery and the photos were made by David Attard, Bird Life Malta. Date 4 april 2023.

The Biometric measurements of the first specimen deposited in the collection of the Museum of Natural Sciences "Sabiha Kasimati" since April 6, 1951 by Vasil Puzanov are given below (Fig.8) Beside to them are showed the Biometric data of the individual who was recovered in Malta:



**Figure 8.** The first specimen brought to the collection of the Museum of Natural Sciences - Tirana. Determined by Vasili Puzanov (Puzanov, 1951). Beside are reflected the Biometric data for the individual ringed in 2022.

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Scientific fund of the Museum of Natural Sciences - Collected birds, shelf