

An aberrant Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* at Sidi Bou Rhaba lake, Morocco

Marc ILLA LLOBET ⁽¹⁾ & Lúdia GIMÉNEZ LOZANO

⁽¹⁾ Ample 6, Santpedor (08251), Barcelona, Catalonia (Spain)
marc@illa.cat

Disponible en ligne (Available online): 31 May 2015

During our visit to Sidi Bou Rhaba lake (34°15'0"N 6°40'0"W) on 19 February 2015 afternoon, we spotted an aberrant coloured male Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*) among other normal coloured ones.

Following van Grouw (2006), we think this is a case of dilution, probably of the form isabel. Looking at the bird, the main black areas in a normal male Red-crested Pochard have turned pale brown, due to a supposed reduction of eumelanin. Also, mantle and head feathers, with brown and orangish colours respectively, have turned paler. Looking at the bird, the differences in wear with the others Red-crested Pochards also attracted our attention. In fact, if eumelanin has been reduced, this has affected all feathers, making them more sensitive to sunlight and other abrasion factors.



Looking at the neck and undertail coverts (feathers that are expected to be less exposed to abrasion because of their protected position), it is possible to see some quite dark feathers. We understand that as remaining of eumelanin that hasn't been worn, but is clearly paler than the normal bird beside. So, we think this bird has a reduction of eumelanin and probably it has the phaeomelanin intact (isabel form), and the paler colour of orangish feathers is a consequence of the high abrasion.

There are a lot of factors that determine and change the aspect of birds such this one, making really difficult to be very concise without a proper in-hand exam of the individual. Nonetheless, we rely on the importance of reporting these exceptional cases.

Aberrant Red-crested Pochard





References

- Guay, P.-J. & Potvin, D.A.** 2010. A schizochroistic Australian Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*. *Canberra Bird Notes* 35 : 153-157.
- Robb, M. & Pop, R.** 2012. An aberrantly coloured buzzard *Buteo bannermani* on Santo Antão, Cape Verde Islands, in November 2012, with notes on the past and present status of the species. *Zoologia Caboverdiana* 3 : 87-90.
- van Grouw, H.** 2006. Not every white bird is an albino: Sense and nonsense about colour aberrations in birds. *Dutch Birding* 28: 79-89.
- van Grouw, H.** 2012. What colour is that Sparrow? A case study: colour aberrations in the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. *Intern. Stud. Sparrows* 36: 30-55.
- van Grouw, H. ; Russel, S. & Merne, O.J.** 2011. Notes on colour aberrations in Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. *Seabird* 24: 33-41.