

Short Communication

A case of early breeding of Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

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Abstract - On the 14th of April 2022, during a periodic bird monitoring activity in a wetland area located in the municipality of Mirandola (Moedna), Northern Italy, a breeding pair of Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, were recorded along with chicks aged approximately 2/3 days old. This is clearly a case of extremely early breeding seeing as, in Italy, Pied Avocets lay eggs from late April to June, based on adequate weather and environmental conditions. As for this specific case, an estimated cause of such anticipated breeding may be the previous very mild Winter months with little rainfall as well as the breeding ground offering shelter from predators.

Keywords: Pied Avocet, early breeding, Modena Province, Po Valley, Northern Italy.

Riassunto - Un caso di riproduzione precoce di avocetta (*Recurvirostra avosetta*).

Il 14 aprile 2022, durante il monitoraggio dell'avifauna presente in una zona umida del comune di Mirandola, è stata osservata una coppia di avocette con pulcini di 2-3 giorni di età. Trattasi di una nidificazione particolarmente precoce dal momento che in Italia le deposizioni avvengono dalla terza decade di aprile a fine giugno, in relazione alle condizioni climatiche e ambientali. In questo caso, l'inverno particolarmente mite con scarse precipitazioni abbinate ad un'ottimale località di riproduzione in grado di proteggere da predatori, sembra avere favorito la nidificazione con quasi un mese di anticipo rispetto alla norma.

Parole chiave: avocetta, nidificazione precoce, Italia settentrionale.

The Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) is classified in Italy as partially migratory, breeding mainly in the Upper Adriatic, Puglia and Sardinia, with more recent cases of breeding in Sicily in 1986 (Surdo, 1987) and Tuscany

in 1993 (Tellini Florenzano *et al.*, 1997). It has also been breeding in scattered areas of the Po Valley (Brichetti & Fracasso, 2004) since 1992 (Tinarelli & Passarella, 1993).

It is now a regular breeder in the province of Modena with the first record dating back to 1996 (Gemmato *et al.*, 1997). In 2010, 15 breeding pairs were recorded (Giannella & Gemmato, 2010) and between 30 to 32 pairs in 2011 (Giannella *et al.*, 2012), after which the local population soon stabilized.

On the 14th of April 2022, during one of the periodic bird monitoring activities in a newly created wetland area in 2019 known as 'Le Magnane', Mirandola (Modena) (44.55 North 11.04 East), two adults with chicks aged no more than 2/3 days old were spotted by one of the authors (LT). In Italy, eggs are normally laid from the 10th of April up until the end of June (Pazzucconi, 1997) based on the climate and habitat conditions (Brichetti & Fracasso, 2004). The earliest date known in Italy so far was recorded by Tinarelli *et al.*, (1995) during the first ten-day period of April at Saline di Margherita di Savoia, Puglia.

Similar data has been recorded on the North Sea (Cramp & Simmons, 1983; Snow & Perrins, 1998) as well as in other parts of Europe (Bezzel, 1984; Goutner, 1985).

Recent data regarding similar cases of early breeding has been reported in Eastern Algeria but at a considerably lower altitude (Menouar *et al.*, 2009).

Incubation lasts between 23-25 days (20-28), therefore the eggs must have been laid during March's second ten-day period, almost a month earlier according to previous sources. Such early breeding may be due to highly favorable weather and environmental conditions: the previous Winter months in 2022 saw almost no rainfall, with the presence of small islands located in the water basins which can offer protection against land predators (Hötter & Segebade, 2000).

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