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A case of partial albinism in the western jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* (Linnaeus, 1758)

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Abstract. On 04.11.2024, an adult Western Jackdaw was observed in the centre of the city of Razgrad. The pure white feathers are located on the upper part of the wings, the lower part of the chest, on the neck and cheeks. Three unpublished cases of complete albinos in *Coloeus monedula* and *Garrulus glandarius* from the collection of the National Museum of Natural History in Sofia are also presented.

Keywords: avian albinism, colour abnormalities, corvid birds.

Introduction

Although rare, some observations of partial albinism in birds have been published in Bulgaria. Such are Dragoev (1961) for *Coturnix coturnix* (Linnaeus, 1758) and Grozdanov (2013) for *Passer montanus* (Linnaeus, 1758). Although not particularly rare, cases of albinism in corvids from Bulgaria have not been reported so far. There are single publications abroad on albinism in some groups of birds, e.g. for owls (Alaja & Mikkola, 1997). This message aims only to present some cases of albinism in corvids from Bulgaria – three collected museum specimens – two western jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* (Linnaeus, 1758) (NMNHS 3834 and NMNHS 3847) and a Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius* (Linnaeus, 1758) (NMNHS 3838). All of them remained unpublished so far. It also aims to report a sighting of a live bird.

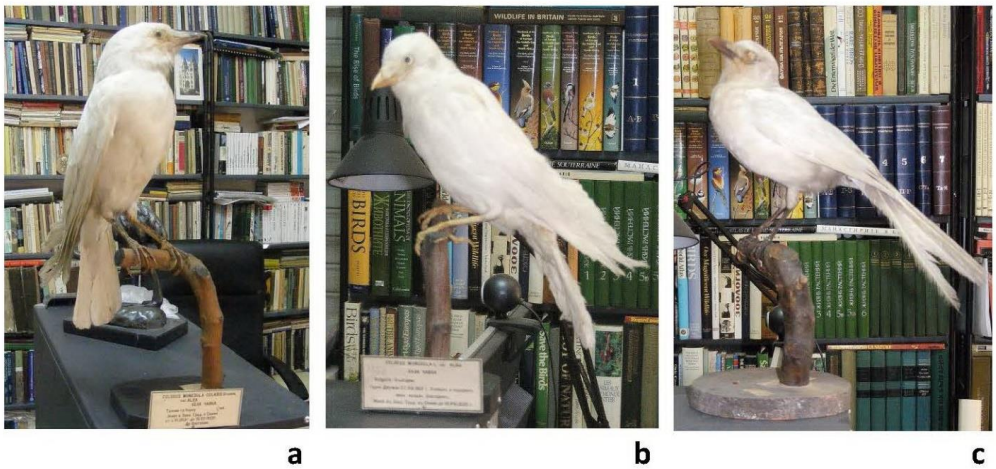

Fig. 1. Albinistic specimens of corvid birds of the collection of the NMNHS: *Coloeus monedula* NMNHS 3834 (a) and NMNHS 3847 (b), and *Garrulus glandarius* NMNHS 3838 (c). 24.08.2010. Photograph: Z. Boev.

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Results and Discussion

Observation

On 04.11.2024, an adult Western Jackdaw was observed in the centre of the city of Razgrad, 43°31'30.7"N 26°31'22.6"E. There were another 7-8 individuals of the species nearby, but this one behaved more distantly than they. The pure white feathers are located on the upper part of the wings, the lower part of the chest, on the neck and cheeks (Fig. 2).

The weather was dry, warm for the season. The bird was spotted at 19:58 EET (UTC+02:00 time zone) - winter time, and observed for about 1 minute from a distance of 4-5 m. It was not shy and allowed to be photographed with the smartphone camera.

Fig. 2. Semi-albinistic western jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* (Linnaeus, 1758). Razgrad City. The right and left sides of the bird's body. 04.11.2024. Photograph: Z. Boev

Collected specimens data

NMNHS 3834 *Garrulus glandarius* Sofia region. Lived in the Sofia Zoo from 05.06.1913 to 10.03.1935. Coll. Dr. Zlatanov;

NMNHS 3838 *Coloeus monedula* Female ad., Çorlu (European Turkiye) 10.07.1922. Coll. Georgi Stoyanov;

NMNHS 3847 *Coloeus monedula* Gorna Dzhumaya (pr. Blagoevgrad) 27.08.1913. Lived in the Sofia Zoo to 14.08.1920. Coll. Zlatarov.

Comments

It is difficult to assess whether complete or partial albinism in corvids (Corvidae) is more common than in other families and orders of birds. At least some of the corvids indeed have some features not present in other birds of the same size. For example, corvids are the largest passerine birds (Passeriformes). They are also the most intelligent in the class of birds in general. Many of the populations of their species are urban and inhabit settlements. Such are jackdaws, magpies, jays, crows and even ravens. Thus, the probability of noticing a bird with albinism is significantly higher. As a genetic mutation, albinism manifests itself as a disorder in the formation of melanin in the skin, which leads in birds to the whitening of feathers and scales. The specimen observed in Razgrad City is a partial albino. Its white feathers are scattered, but concentrated on the upper part of the wings, the lower part of the chest, on the neck and cheeks. Albinism in birds is a rare phenomenon, and in Bulgaria, it is completely unstudied.

References

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