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SHORT COMMUNICATION

SECOND OBSERVATION OF AFRICAN CRAKE *CRECOPSIS EGREGIA* (PETERS, W, 1854) (GRUIFORMES, RALLIDAE) IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

On December 6, 2022, a single individual of African Crake *Crecopsis egregia* (Gruiformes, Rallidae) was recovered in the Algerian Sahara at Illizi City. This observation is considered the second in Algeria after the first at Kerzaz in Béni Abbès dated November 27, 2020.

Keywords: Algerian Sahara, *Crecopsis egregia*, Expansion, Rallidae, New location.

INTRODUCTION

More than two million square kilometers are in the area of Algeria with important ecosystem diversity, contributing to its faunistic and floristic biodiversity, which remains unknown in some regions, especially in the great Algerian desert (Chedad *et al.*, 2020a).

The twelve species of Rallidae recorded in Algeria, eleven of which were reported by Isenmann and Moali (2000) and Samraoui and Samraoui (2008) include: Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (Linnaeus, 1758), Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* (Linnaeus, 1758), Little Crake *Zapornia parva* (Scopoli, 1769), Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (Lichtenstein, MHC, 1818), Western Swampen *Porphyrio porphyrio* (Linnaeus, 1758), Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Linnaeus, 1758, Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata* Vieillot, 1817, Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla* (Pallas, 1776), with doubtful or rare observation: Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis* (Hartlaub, 1857), Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni* Thomson, 1842 and, Corn Crake *Crex crex* (Linnaeus, 1758). Recently, the African Crake *Crecopsis egregia* (Peters, W, 1854) has been added to the list (Haddad *et al.*, 2020).

Second observation of African

African Crane is classified as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International, 2016). This article presents the second sighting report of the African Crane in the east of the Algerian Sahara at Illizi City, after the first recording on November 27, 2022, in the west of the Algerian Sahara at Kerzaz, Béni Abbès, which is located more than 1000 km away from our observation.

NOTES AND OBSERVATION

On the morning of December 6, 2022, this bird was found in a not-good state of health because it seemed that he was tired and unable to fly. Mr. Fouad Bederrar discovered it in a school (Sebgag Mohamed) in Illizi City (8°28'53.66" E; 26°31'5.71" N; 569 m a.s.l.) (Map 1, Pl. 1). The bird looks a little like a chicken, but its plumage is different. The designated authorities were contacted represented by the Directorate of Forest Conservation of Illizi to be identified as a species of Rallidae, the African Crane, and transferred directly to the veterinary services in order to carry out the necessary examinations. The veterinarian examined it, made sure of its safety, provided medication, and in the same day evening, it regained its energy and was released into a green area extending 10 hectares, which has water and diverse vegetation (8°27'31.21"E; 26°28'58.44"N; 557 m a.s.l.), which in turn is 7.6 km away from the mouth of the wastewater discharges (8°23'25.33"E; 26°30'48.04"N; 550 m a.s.l.), which is considered a reservoir for fauna and flora biodiversity (Pl. 1). The same place was visited several times, but the bird has not been observed in this area.

African Crane is a sub-Saharan species whose distribution ranges from Senegal to Kenya and, towards the south, to the north and east of South Africa; it avoids the arid zones of the south-west and South Africa (Taylor, 2020). This species is partly migratory, but its movements are complex and poorly understood (Qninba *et al.*, 2020). It seasonally migrates away from the equator in northerly and southerly directions to breed during wet periods (Taylor and van Perlo, 1998).

Our observation is the second for Algeria, after the first was spotted on November 27, 2020, at more than 1000 km to the west at Kerzaz, Béni Abbès (Haddad *et al.*, 2020) (Map. 1).

This species of rail is a rare vagrant in the Western Palearctic (Haddad *et al.*, 2020). Most of the mentions concern birds found weakened or dead, most of them during the winter period (Haas, 2017); this was confirmed during the two observations in Algeria. In Morocco, too, only two observations have been recorded in Western Sahara (Bergier *et al.*, 2011; Qninba *et al.*, 2020). In Tunisia, there have been no reports on the presence of this rail, as evidenced by Isenmann *et al.*, (2005) and Azafzaf *et al.* (2015).

Desert areas with water and food sources are considered essential stopover sites for migratory birds and important places for wintering and breeding (Chedad *et al.*, 2020b, 2022), where in Illizi (Algerian Sahara), this region is considered important in terms of avifaunistic diversity, because three new species have already been recorded there and added to birds list of Algeria: Striated Heron *Butorides striata* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Durand *et al.*, 2010), Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Hadouchi *et al.*, 2022) and Dunn's Lark

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Eremalauda dunni (Shelley, 1904) (Harzallah *et al.*, 2021). In the same area of southeastern Algeria, we must also add two other interesting species confirmed by Algerian amateur ornithologists: Moltoni's Warbler *Curruca subalpina* (Temminck, 1820) El Borma, region of Ouargla (Haddad and Viechec, 2019), Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* Pallas, 1776 in Touggourt (Adamou, 2021), and Rüppell's Warbler *Curruca ruppeli* (Temminck, 1823) in Djanet, region of Illizi (Haddad and Afoutni, 2019).

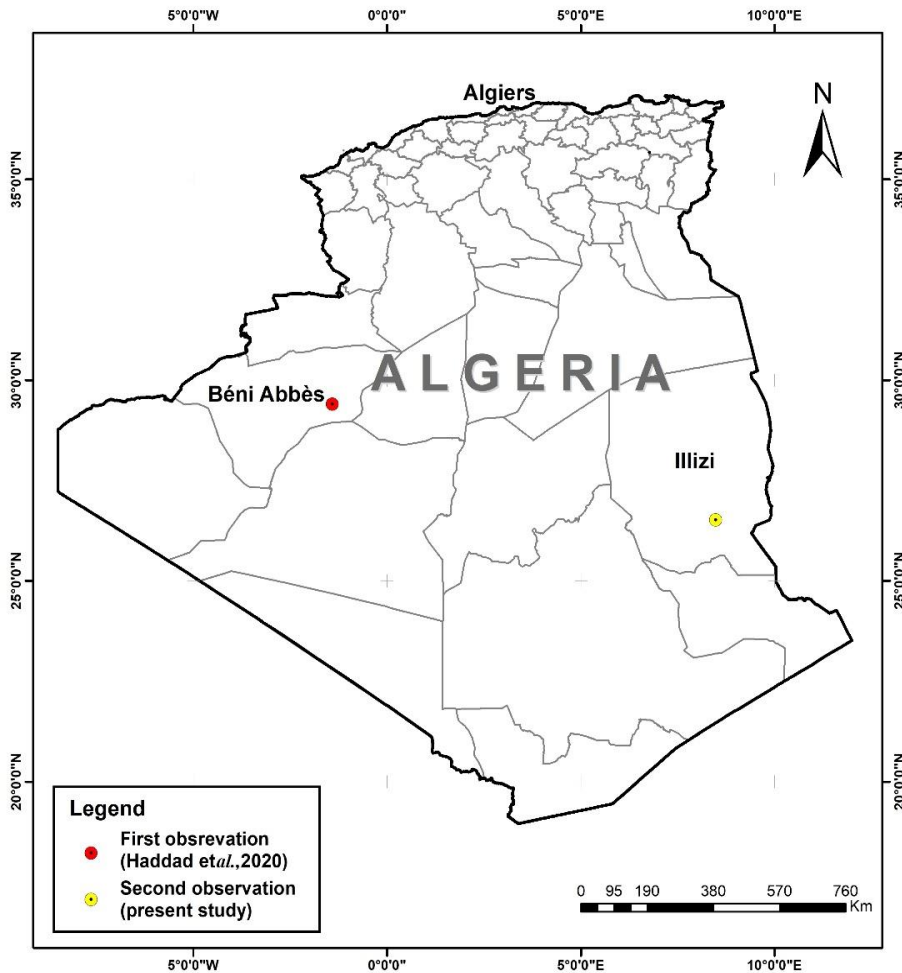
An important area that needs to be reminded of and that contains many surprises in the future is the extreme south of Algeria. We have already seen several species of birds added to the list of birds discovered in Algeria, especially in this area, which has remained unexplored for a long time. Until 2019 ornithological trips were started by Algerian amateur ornithologists, especially members of the ecoCirta association, the National Network of Algerian Ornithologist Watchers (R.N.O.O.A.), and the Algerian Wildlife Watchers Association. Among the species added to the list are: Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* (Boddaert, 1783) in region of Tamanrasset (Haddad and Afoutni, 2020), Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus* (Linnaeus, 1766), Black Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* (Müller, PLS, 1776) in region of Tamanrasset before but now In-Guezzam (Haddad and Bekkouche, 2021), African grey woodpecker *Dendropicos Goertae* (Müller, PLS, 1776) in region of Tinzaouatine and Timiaouine (Haddad and Afoutni, 2022), White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*, Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata* (Gmelin, JF, 1789) and Village Indigobird *Vidua chalybeata* (Müller, PLS, 1776) in Tamanrasset at In-Guezzam (Boulaouad *et al.*, 2022).

It is also worth noting that the desert areas have experienced an expansion in the nesting of many birds, including the Little Egret *Egretta garzette* (Linnaeus, 1766), Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (Scopoli, 1769), and Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (Linnaeus, 1758) in Ghardaïa (Chedad *et al.*, 2022, 2023; Bouzid *et al.*, 2023), and Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Linnaeus, 1758 in Biskra (Farhi *et al.*, 2022).



Plate (1): African Crake *Crecopsis egregia* in Illizi, Algeria (Abdelkarim Lachichi, December.6. 2022).

Second observation of African



Map (1): Observation sites for African Crane *Crecopsis egregia* in Algeria: in red, the first observation by Haddad *et al.* (2020) and, yellow, the second observation in this present study.

CONCLUSIONS

Recent discoveries in the Algerian avifaunistic world should motivate more local naturalists (amateurs and professionals) to continue research. However, the list of birds mentioned is certainly not yet completed, and it is likely that in the future, more new species will be discovered.

We strongly believe that new surprises are always present, but the vastness of the country's space and the lack of staff on the ground in some regions leave them unknown.

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Mainly, we encourage all people interested in nature to acquire perseverance, to have a passion for nature, and above all, to contribute to citizen science to improve knowledge and enrich the country's heritage.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

"The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare".

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Second observation of African

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المشاهدة الثانية للمرعة الافريقية (*Crecopsis egregia* (Peters, W, 1854)
(Gruiformes, Rallidae)

في الجزائر

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الخلاصة

في 06 ديسمبر 2022، تم العثور على فرد واحد من المرعة الافريقية *Crecopsis egregia* (Gruiformes, Rallidae) في الصحراء الجزائرية في مدينة إليزي، وتعتبر هذه الملاحظة الثانية في الجزائر، بعد الأولى في منطقة كرزاز في بني عباس بتاريخ 27 نوفمبر 2020.