

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*): a historical breeding record from the Czech Republic

Vodouš tmavý (Tringa erythropus): historický doklad o hnízdění v České republice

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The National Museum in Prague contains an adult stuffed male Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) in breeding plumage. The label indicates that it successfully bred at the Velký Hájský pond near České Budějovice in southern Bohemia, Czech Republic, prior to 1913. The breeding was observed and the bird was subsequently collected by Jan Pícha (1872–1930). More details are not known. This has been the first breeding record of Spotted Redshank in the Czech Republic and Central Europe.

Národní muzeum v Praze má ve svých sbírkách vycpaninu dospělého samce vodouše tmavého (Tringa erythropus) ve svatebním šatě. Podle etikety tento pták vyhníždil před rokem 1913 na rybníku Velký Hájský u Českých Budějovic. Hnízdění pozoroval a vodouše pak střílel Jan Pícha (1872–1930). Bližší informace o tomto hnízdění nejsou známy, avšak osobnost Jana Píchy a další nepřímé doklady svědčí o tom, že je možné tento nálezy akceptovat. Jedná se o jediný doklad zahníždění tohoto druhu v České republice a celé střední Evropě.

Keywords: *Tringa erythropus*, first breeding record, Czech Republic, Jan Pícha

Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas, 1764), breeds in tundra and forested tundra of the northern Palearctic (Piersma et al. 1996, Koskimies & Svensson 1997). It commonly visits central Europe on migration, but no breeding attempts have ever been recorded there (Glutz von Blotzheim et al. 1977, Koskimies & Svensson 1997).

Ornithological collections of the National Museum in Prague (NMP) contain a stuffed specimen of a Spotted Redshank with a label, which indicates,

that Spotted Redshank bred in Bohemia prior to 1913. The original label (Fig. 1), written by Václav Vávra (1866–1941), then curator of zoology at the Museum (see Štěpánek 1975), reads as follows (in Czech): „Hnízdí se, Dr. Pícha nechal jej vyvésti mladé z hnízda, načež jej střílel pro naše sbírky.“, i.e. „It breeds. Dr. Pícha led it to [incubate eggs] and take out young from the nest, and then shot it for our collections“ (my translation). The bird (NMP P6V-3787) is an adult Spotted Redshank in breeding plumage. Bare

parts of its legs are blackish, which colour these birds obtain solely during breeding period (e.g., Svensson et al. 1999). Although the colour was not recorded in fresh state, it can be excluded, that the black colour originated by post-mortal changes. The bird was sexed as a male, but this information cannot be confirmed on the basis of the material left. According to the label, the breeding was recorded at „Vel. Hájský ryb. u Huboké“, i.e., the Velký Hájský pond between České Budějovice and Hluboká in southern Bohemia.

birds (Záleský 1927, Sýkora & Mayer 1931). There is thus no a priori reason to doubt his observations.

(2) Taxonomic identity of the bird is confirmed, because the bird is preserved in NMP. Note that the bird is called *Totanus fuscus* on the label, which was the standard name for the Spotted Redshank in the early 20th century (e.g., Hennicke 1902, Kněžourek 1912, Trouessart 1912)

(3) The label mentioned only one bird (a male), which is in accordance with the fact, that female Spotted

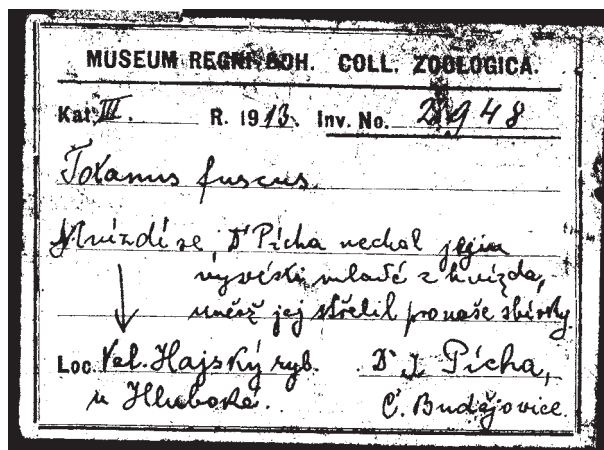


Fig. 1. Original label from 1913 attached to the Spotted Redshank NMP P6V-3787.

Obr. 1. Původní etiketa z roku 1913 připojená k vodouši tmavému NMP P6V-3787.

This is evidently an unpublished breeding record of the Spotted Redshank. Being far to the south of the bird's normal breeding range, this record requires closer discussion. The following are data, which can be listed in support of the record:

(1) Jan Pícha (1872–1930), ophthalmologist in České Budějovice, was a renowned ornithologist of his time (Záleský 1930, Baťa 1931, 1933, Hořice 1946; see also Hudec 1999), who also created a large collection of stuffed

Redshanks often leave breeding grounds before eggs hatch, leaving incubation and subsequent care for chicks to the male (Mjelstad & Saetersdal 1987, Piersma et al. 1996). This behaviour is unknown in closely related Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* (Piersma et al. 1996), which lowers the possibility, that Pícha found a nest of Common Redshanks and that the male Spotted Redshank he observed and subsequently collected for the National Museum was just a late, non-

breeding migrant that stopped at the Velký Hájský pond.

Pícha did not submit any details on the breeding, but he did not list such data even for specimens in his collection of birds (see Záleský 1927, Sýkora & Mayer 1931, Hudec 1999). Consequently, there is no indication as to the year of the breeding. In 1913, Pícha donated to the National Museum four rare birds collected by himself at Hluboká in southern Bohemia (*Stercorarius parasiticus*, *Tringa erythropus*, *Calidris alba* and *Pluvialis squatarola*), which were recorded on 5 April 1913 under acquisition numbers 2947–2950. Of these, *Stercorarius parasiticus* was collected in 1913, *Pluvialis squatarola* in 1906, and the date is unknown for the remaining two specimens. Accordingly, the year when Spotted Redshank bred at the Velký Hájský pond remains unknown, but it was prior to 1913, because breeding could not be finished before 5 April. Considering that Kněžourek (1912) did not know this record, it is possible to speculate that it was not long before 1913. If so, Spotted Redshank bred in southern Bohemia sometime between 1910–1912. However, if Kněžourek (1912) did not know the record for some other reason than the coincidence in time, the breeding could have been attempted even earlier.

It is not surprising that the record was overlooked by authors of modern surveys of the Czech avifauna (Hudec & Černý 1977, Hudec et al. 1995). Pícha did not publish his observations (see Hudec 1999; for a single, posthumously published exception see Pícha 1931), and the record was probably made just when Kněžourek (1912) published his survey of Czech birds. Between the world wars, faunistic data on Czech birds were collected by Josef Jirsík (1898–1956), but he never did publish the chapter on waders

and it remains unknown whether he was aware of this record or not. Thereafter, the Spotted Redshank from the Velký Hájský pond remained buried among thousands of stuffed birds housed in NMP.

Migratory birds occasionally breed outside of their standard breeding ranges in wintering areas and/or on places where they stop during migration. In the Czech Republic, such exceptional breeding records of boreal birds were provided e.g. for Eurasian Waxwing (*Bombus garrulus*) in 1941 (Chytil 2003), Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) in 1967 (Bárta & Tyrner 1970), and Smew (*Mergus albellus*) in 1984 (Z. Veselovský in Hudec 1994). Pícha's record of the breeding of Spotted Redshank shortly prior to 1913 on the Velký Hájský pond is another example of such an exceptional behaviour.

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