WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Phalaropus tricolor* – A NEW SPECIES FOR AVIFAUNA OF SERBIA

Tribarvni liskonožec *Phalaropus tricolor* – nova vrsta za avifaunu Srbije

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Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* is a swimming sandpiper species of the New World. It is the largest and most terrestrial of the three phalarope species (HAYMAN *et al.* 1986), which are broadly known for their reversed sex-role mating system (COLWELL & JEHL 2020). Wilson's Phalarope distribution range is entirely continental. It typically breeds in open habitats adjacent to inland wetlands on prairies and agricultural lands in western parts of the United States and southwestern and central Canada (HAYMAN *et al.* 1986, COLWELL & JEHL 2020). On migration, this species occurs on a wide variety of freshwater lakes, ponds and small pools showing a preference for alkaline waters. Wilson's Phalarope winters in the October–April period across altiplano from Bolivia to Argentina and returns to the breeding grounds in late April and early May (HAYMAN *et al.* 1986, COLWELL & JEHL 2020). The species is a rare, but regular vagrant in Western Palearctic with most observations reported from British Isles (ALSTRÖM & COLSTON 1991). Here, we report on the first observation of Wilson's Phalarope in the territory of Serbia.

In the early morning of 22 September 2019, whilst birdwatching on the northern shore of alkaline lake Rusanda close to the village of Melenci (Banat District, Northern Serbia), the first author spotted one individual of Wilson's Phalarope approximately 20 m from the lakeshore (coordinates 45.525952 N, 20.302900 E), foraging together with 12 Dunlins *Calidris alpina* and three Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*. At first glance, the observer had an impression that it was Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* – a regular, but scarce autumn migrant

through northern Serbia. Yet, the general structure of the observed bird was pretty different. The observed specimen was notably smaller, short-legged with a thinner and finer bill than Marsh Sandpiper. Besides, the feeding habit significantly differed from that of Marsh Sandpiper. During a short period of observation, the bird was actively feeding in shallow water (1–3 cm deep), making jerky, vigorous darting left-right movements with its head and bill. After five minutes of observation, all the birds flew together to the opposite side of the lake. Before flying off, the observed bird was photographed (Figure 1).

Later in the same day, photographs of an unusual bird were displayed by few Internet birding groups, where numerous birdwatchers identified it as Wilson's Phalarope. Indeed, the additional analysis of photographs by both authors reaffirmed the identification. The observed and photographed specimen was distinguished from similar Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* and Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* by its greyer (paler) plumage, distinctly longer bill, lack of bold black eye-patch and bright yellow colour of legs. Other somewhat similar wader species like Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* are characterized by their significantly different proportions, behaviour and not so pure whitish colour below. The next day, Vukas Vučković re-found the bird and took several photos of it in flight. The white rump patch, plain dark grey wings and lack of prom-

Figure 1: Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, lake Rusanda near the village of Melenci, N Serbia, 22 September 2019 (photo: Miroslav Mareš)

Slika 1: Tribarvni liskonožec *Phalaropus tricolor*, jezero Rusanda, Melenci, S Srbija, 22 september 2019 (foto: Miroslav Mareš)

Figure 2: Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* in flight, lake Rusanda near the village of Melenci, N Serbia, 23 September 2019 (photo: Vukas Vučković)

Slika 2: Tribarvni liskonožec *Phalaropus tricolor* v letu, jezero Rusanda, Melenci, S Srbija, 23 septembar 2019 (foto: Vukas Vučković)

inent white wing bars confirmed once again that it was an individual of Wilson's Phalarope (Figure 2).

The general characteristics and colouration of its upperpart, wing coverts and head pattern suggest that the bird was in first-winter plumage (HAYMAN *et al.* 1986, MESSAGE & TAYLOR 2005, SVENSSON *et al.* 2009).

So far, the Wilson's Phalarope has not been listed neither in the checklist of the bird species recorded in Serbia (ŠĆIBAN *et al.* 2015) nor in the National Rulebook on the Designation and Protection of Strictly Protected Wild Flora, Fauna and Fungi (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 5/2010, 47/2011, 32/2016, 98/2016). This species is a somewhat regular visitor throughout western Europe with few records annually (ALSTRÖM & COLSTON 1991). However, confirmed sightings of Wilson's Phalarope in southeastern Europe are scarce and single individuals were registered sporadically. According to the published literature, there are only six records including the one described here. Wilson's Phalarope was recorded once in Romania (DAROCZI *et al.* 2015), three times in Greece (HRC 2007, 2017) and once in Bulgaria (IVANOV *et al.* 2014). Elsewhere on the Balkan Peninsula, we could not have found any published data on this species. The described observation of Wilson's Phalarope amply confirms the conservation importance of the IBA Okanj and Rusanda (RS 038) as a stopover station for a wide variety of waterbirds including sandpipers and their allies.

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Povzetek

Septembra 2019 je bil na jezeru Rusanda (severna Srbija) opazovan tribarvni liskonožec *Phalaropus tricolor*. Vrsta gnezdi v Severni Ameriki, na selitvi pa se občasno pojavlja tudi v Evropi. Opisano opazovanje je prvi podatek za to vrsto na območju Srbije in le šesti za območje jugovzhodne Evrope. Doslej je bila opazovana še v Romuniji, Grčiji in Bolgariji.

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