

the wing structure. Steijn (2005) proposed differences based upon the emarginations on p3-6 for *phoenicuroides* and a ratio for spacing between p5-6 and p6-7.

Those who have encountered Eastern Black Redstarts on trips abroad will no doubt find it difficult to believe that the striking rufous-bellied birds they saw were the same species as birds in Western Europe. Ertan (2006) concluded that the western races (*gibraltariensis*, *ochrurus* and *semirufus*) form a monophyletic group and that *phoenicuroides* and *rufiventris* were the most divergent subspecies. Further, *phoenicuroides* and *rufiventris* appear to be more closely related to Hodgson's Redstart *P. hodgsoni* than to Western Black Redstart (Ertan 2002; Ertan 2006).

Steijn (2005) suggested there might be merit in treating rufous-bellied *phoenicuroides* and *rufiventris* as a separate species (Eastern Black Redstart). The taxonomic status of intermediate *ochrurus* is not clear. The next British suspect will no doubt be studied closely by observers now better prepared to tackle the identification of these complex stunning birds.

## **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

(Linnaeus, 1758). Breeds from northwest Africa and Europe east to Lake Baikal and south to the Balkan countries and Ukraine. Nominate *phoenicurus* found across the range, except in the south-east where it is replaced by *samamiscus* from Turkey, Crimea to Turkmenistan, and Iran; possible zone of intergradation in Greece and southern Balkans. Wintering grounds are in Sahel zones of Africa with some in southern Arabia.

Polytypic, two subspecies. Ehrenberg's Redstart *samamiscus* (Hablizl, 1783) is a vagrant of uncertain status. A review of all past records, including those previously not accepted, is in progress and a number of new claims are being assessed. The BBRC published a detailed set of criteria by which *samamiscus* can be separated from nominate *phoenicurus* (Small 2009). The conclusion was that adult male *samamiscus* should be separable easily from adult male *phoenicurus*, even individuals that show conspicuous pale fringes to the tertials and inner secondaries. In *samamiscus* the white edges extend from the tertials and secondaries on to the primaries and form an eye-catching wing panel that contrasts with a blacker mantle and scapulars. The ear coverts also have more extensive black than *phoenicurus*. First-winter male *samamiscus* is far more difficult to separate as it matches adult male *phoenicurus* closely. Attention to correct ageing is important. Adult *phoenicurus* showing a white wing panel on the tertials and inner secondaries may be identifiable from first-winter *samamiscus* only by loreal colour: black in *Phoenicurus* and fringed paler in *samamiscus*.

Genetic differences between the two forms were highlighted by Ertan (2006) who found a 2.3 per cent divergence between *samamiscus* and *phoenicurus* (marginally below that of the recently re-split Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* and Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*). There also appear to be differences in the calls and songs of *samamiscus* and *phoenicurus*, and males are morphologically diagnosable.

## **Ehrenberg's Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamiscus*

Breeds from central Turkey, east to the Crimea and Caucasus Mountains and into northern Iran. Winters in northeast Africa.

**Status:** Two birds identified as this form are presently accepted (Small 2009). The status of this sometimes striking form in Britain is poorly known as many claims have not been submitted to the *BBRC* because of a lack of confidence in the criteria for identifying anything other than adult males.

**1975 Norfolk:** Heacham male 26th October

**1989 Norfolk:** Holkham Meals 1st-winter male 12th September

Previously accepted records of males from Fife Ness on 23rd September 1976 and from near Keynsham, Avon, on 22nd-23rd September 1989 were found to be unacceptable during the early part of the review of records for the form (Fraser *et al* 2007). Four additional records are under review by the *BBRC* from Scilly (St. Agnes on 22nd October 1994 and Tresco from 10th-12th October 2004); Shetland (Grutness from 23rd-26th September 2000) and Cleveland (Hartlepool on 25th September 2001) (Small 2009). Numerous others have been considered to involve this form. Forrester *et al* (2007) added a further eight in Scotland from 1948-2000 (one in early September, five in late September and two in early November) that they felt should be reviewed. These birds were often associated with drift conditions. Putative claims from elsewhere have also been reported in recent years. How many fall within the variation of male *phoenicurus* is uncertain, but the two accepted records and others will be re-examined by *BBRC* under criteria set by Small (2009).

**Discussion:** There are accepted records for Sweden (male 25th-26th September 1988, female 20th October 1993, male 21st September 1996, female 18th October 1996) and Finland (29th April 2004) and a claim is pending from the Netherlands (10th September 2005). There are several records from France (the first was a male caught in the Camargue on 5th April 1959) and one from Italy. A record from the Balearic Islands remains under review.

It seems likely that many or most British claims will lack the detail for acceptance, even though some have been well photographed. All are autumn records. Young birds are the most likely age class to wander in autumn and, given that only adults are unequivocally diagnosable, many may be unidentifiable under present criteria. Might it take a spring overshoot to stake an unequivocal claim on the British List?

## **Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri*

(*Olph-Galliard, 1852*). Breeds in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Mostly resident, but makes altitudinal and short-distance movements outside the breeding season.

Monotypic.

Exceptionally rare vagrant from northwest Africa; one British record the only sighting in northern Europe.

**Status:** One record.

**1988 Pembrokeshire:** Dinas Head male 24th April