

## Book Reviews - Recensioni

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**Barnagaud J.-Y., Issa N. & Dalloyau S., 2019.** Where to watch birds in France. Pelagic Publ., Exeter, UK, 336 p., £ 25.00.

More than 300 birding sites, 466 maps, over 400 occurring bird species are synthesized in this new book published by Pelagic Publishing, specialized in naturalistic subjects (see: [www.pelagicpublishing.com](http://www.pelagicpublishing.com)). In France 357 species regularly breed or winter. France, as other Mediterranean countries, has a very rich avifauna, one of the richest of Europe; you may find from Mediterranean to alpine species at different altitudes and habitats.

This is more than a touristic guide, it is a naturalistic guide to the best French sites where it is possible to observe birds. The authors have written this book for bird-watchers and ornithologists, giving them the possibility to visit splendid landscapes and observe through their binoculars common and rare birds. The continental France and the island of Corsica are divided into 14 regions, where the authors highlight 312 best birding sites, chosen for ease of access and particular presence of bird species. Naturalists visiting France will find in this book practical information and a series of detailed descriptions of tours, best explained in the maps. Each site is treated with abundance of details, showing that the authors have run across the regions many times. For each site the authors give the number of days needed to visit, a short description of the habitat and the best way to reach the most interesting areas where to watch birds. In addition, they suggest also the

best season to observe birds and give the necessary information to locate the site in the maps. Rarely it is possible to find a naturalistic guide with this abundance of information on the roads to drive or to walk and the bird species that may be observed. The novelty of this book is that all the sites are geolocated in a file that can be downloaded from the publisher's website and loaded onto any GPS device. This increase certainly the chance to find them. For each group of birding sites a list of key species is reported with the season of presence.

In the last pages of the book there is a section that provides details of 30 species generally included in the wish-list of birders. My favourite are Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*, Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougalii*, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*, and Corsican Nuthatch *Sitta whiteheadi*, an endemic species of Corsica, one of the most interesting Mediterranean birds, once considered related to the North American Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*, but instead discovered to be a Mediterranean relict, related only to Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*, living on the Algerian Kabylie.

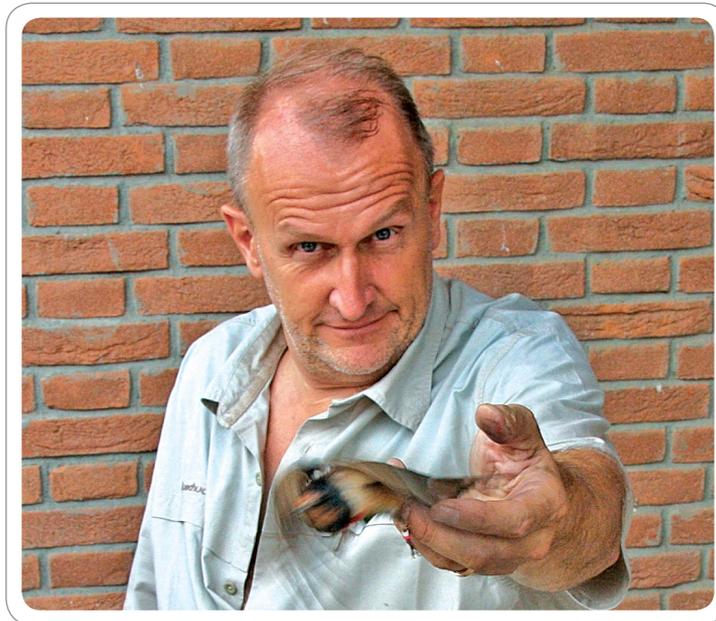
A final checklist of all the species and subspecies of annual occurrence in France concludes the book. In this long table are also reported the seasons of presence and the level of abundance. Everybody who has planned a naturalistic trip to France must place in the luggage this book!

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## Obituary - Necrologio

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**Nicola Saino** (6<sup>th</sup> December 1961 – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019)



On April 17th, 2019, at the age of 57, Nicola Saino unexpectedly passed away in Milano, his hometown. Nicola started his research career in the early 1980s by collaborating with the ornithology research group of the University of Pavia to study the breeding ecology of colonial waterbirds in the Comacchio Lagoon in north-eastern Italy. He graduated in Natural Sciences in 1986 with a thesis on the feeding ecology of gulls and terns at the University of Milano, co-supervised by one of us (MF). In 1992, he obtained his PhD at the University of Milano, by defending a thesis focused on the mechanisms that maintain phenotypic differentiation in the Italian carrion-hooded crow (*Corvus c. corone* - *C. c. cornix*), hybrid zone. He then spent a period as a post-doc researcher in Uppsala University and in Denmark under the supervision of one of us (APM). He began his academic career as a research technician (1992-1998), first at the University of Roma 'La Sapienza' and then at the University of Milano. He was first appointed Associate Professor of Ecology at the University of Milano-Bicocca in 1998. Soon after he moved to the University of Milano, where he would become Full Professor of Ecology in 2005 and established his research group. He served as a deputy Director of the Department of Biosciences (2012-2014) and as a coordinator of the PhD school in Environmental Sciences of the University of Milano, which he contributed to establish in 2013. In 2017, Nicola was among the main promoters and founders of the Department of Environmental Science and Policy, a multidisciplinary department broadly focused on environmental issues. He subsequently became its deputy Director.

Nicola was an outstanding scientist and naturalist. He was extremely dynamic and curious, always keen on asking questions about natural phenomena, enthusiastic about developing new hypotheses and testing new ideas through a rigorous scientific approach. As a scholar he was a highly prolific and eclectic in his research interests. These ranged from fundamental organismal ecology, to comparative biology, ecophysiology, ecotoxicology, population genomics, and climate change effects. As of October 2019 he authored or co-authored over 300 papers in peer-reviewed journals, including top journals in ecology and

evolutionary biology such as PNAS, Nature Genetics, Ecology Letters, Evolution, Ecology, Biological Reviews, The American Naturalist, Proceedings of the Royal Society B, Journal of Animal Ecology, and many others. Collectively, his publications received over 14,000 citations (according to his Google Scholar profile, accessed October 2019). During his career, many tens of students defended their theses based on research conducted in his laboratory.

Despite his broad range of research interests, the main focus of his scientific interest was doubtless behavioural ecology. Indeed, in a recent version of his curriculum vitae, he defined himself as a 'behavioural ecologist and evolutionary biologist'. He was also a passionate teacher of animal behaviour and behavioural ecology for both BSc and MSc students. He aimed at unravelling both the proximate and ultimate causes of behavioural variation and natural selection in the wild, using mainly bird species as his study subjects. Through elegant and carefully designed experiments in natural settings, he was able to demonstrate the causal links between several aspects of the phenotype – including morphology, sexual ornaments, stress response, immunity, oxidative status – and fitness. He loved conducting fieldwork first hand, and he did it with great skill. Most of his fieldwork was carried out in northern Italy, but he participated to or organized research expeditions to Chernobyl (Ukraine), Kenya, Nigeria, and the Ross Sea (Antarctica, 1996-1999). He is perhaps best known worldwide for his career-long research activity on the barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*). He began studying this iconic species in the early nineties by collaborating with one of us (APM), until he established his own long-term study in northern Italy in 1994, collecting longitudinal data on morphology, physiology and reproduction. This long-term study aimed at exploring variation in life-history traits, trade-offs, and patterns of natural and sexual selection. Two of us (DR and RA) are proud to carry on that same study into the future.

Among the many research topics he has explored during his career, we highlight three areas of behavioural ecology where he made pioneering empirical contributions. These are: 1) ecological immunology, demonstrating that immunocompetence is a major driver of differences in fitness among both adult individual birds and their offspring; 2) parent-offspring communication, showing that carotenoid-based signaling of condition by bird nestlings affects parental allocation decisions; and 3) maternal effects, providing experimental evidence that maternal transfer of nutrients, antioxidants and hormones to the eggs shapes the phenotype of the offspring in adaptive ways. Throughout his career, he established a global network of collaborations and mentored several ecologists, including three of us (AB-A, DR, RA), who are now at different stages of academic career in Italy and abroad. The legacy of Nicola's work continues in the lives and studies of the many of his former students who learned about the scientific understanding of animal behaviour from him.

His sudden premature departure has left an overwhelming emptiness in our lives, as well as in those of his friends and of his many collaborators and colleagues. His insight, acumen and dedication will be severely missed. We wish to express our deepest sympathy to his family, especially to his wife Francesca and their daughter Lucia.

**Diego Rubolini, Roberto Ambrosini, Andrea Bonisoli-Alquati,  
Anders P. Møller, Paolo Galeotti, Giuseppe Bogliani, Mauro Fasola**