

gemäht werden, da der höhere Proteingehalt den Wegfall von Kraftfutter teilweise kompensieren kann. Andererseits ist auch gewisser Anteil „Spätmähwiesen“ (entspricht zweimähdigen Wiesen) zur Versorgung mit Rohfasern erforderlich, dieser Anteil wird mit ca. 20% der Flächen eingeschätzt.

**I**m Vorfeld war die Kommunikation zwischen Naturschutz, Landwirten und Molkerei kaum vorhanden. Die Befürchtungen sind, dass durch die noch frühere Mahd weitere Braunkehlchenflächen verloren gehen, und möglicherweise Betriebe, die bisher durch Vertragsnaturschutz die Braunkehlchen erhalten haben, nun durch die finanziellen Anreize der regionalen Milch liefern und die Verträge auflösen. Andererseits könnte auch durch optimale Platzierung der „Spätmahd-

flächen“ die Situation für die Braunkehlchen verbessert werden. Der Biosphärenpark bekennt sich zwar zum Braunkehlchen als wichtiges Schutzgut, sieht es aber nicht zumutbar für die Landwirte, verbindliche Schnittzeitpunkte für die Betriebe vorzugeben. Außerdem sei die generelle Intensivierung der Landwirtschaft die Ursache für den Rückgang der Braunkehlchen, dieses regionale Milchprodukt soll nicht als Sündenbock dienen.

**D**ie Milch ist seit Oktober auf dem Markt, im November gab es eine Krisensitzung in der sich die verschiedenen stakeholder angenähert haben. Es wurde noch keine von allen positiv beurteilte Lösung gefunden, aber einige Ansätze (intensive Beratung der Betriebe, Monitoring der Mahd und Braunkehlchen) wurden entwickelt.

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## How I got hooked on Whinchats?

Davorin Tome (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

**A**s a researcher, ornithologist usually investigate a single species or a single problem. He/she try to squeeze as much of the information from the study object and reveal it through a publication process to others. What can also be interesting, but nobody write about, is how the researcher decide which species he/she will work with? This can sometimes be very subjective process – the species is chosen because he/she is emotionally attached to it by knowing it from his/her youth, or since it lives near his/her home, or since it was very nicely presented in some book or in a film. Sometimes species is selected according to available funding. When I was in a process of selecting a species I'm working with, my decision was motivated by a problem. To work on one of the greatest threats to farmland birds – a grassland management.

**L**iving on the outskirts of Ljubljansko barje – a Natura 2000 site designated predominantly due to preserved extensive grasslands, I have a possibility to select between different grassland bird species. Already in the early stage of the decision making process I eliminated those, that start to nest early in the season, like Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew and Eurasian Skylark. Early breeding reduce conflict with mowing

to a certain degree, so their conservation problem is not exactly what I was looking for. With the process of elimination, I decided against Grasshopper Warbler and Stonechat, both being only modestly numerous on our grasslands. Common Whitethroat and Tree Pipit, although a grassland species, usually include wooden plants in their habitat, what was a factor I was not keen to include into my investigations. Sedge and Marsh Warbler, according to my observations from the area, breed in extremely extensive grasslands, where conflict with farming is less pronounced. At the end I was left with three species to choose from: the Corncrake, the Quail and the Whinchat. All three with rather similar breeding habits and with population size on Ljubljansko barje estimated at that time to about 300, 400 and 2000 breeding pairs respectively.

**C**orncrake was, at that time, very tempting species to start a research with. It was still regarded as very endangered on European level, there were quite some results of similar investigations from around the Europe already published, we had results of monitoring from Slovenia available. All in all, investigations of Corncrake would not be a completely fresh start, what I considered as a plus. Quail, on the other hand,



Whinchat in Ljubljansko barje / Slovenia (Photo: © Davorin TOME)

was a species, we, in Slovenia, know almost nothing about, with only a few publications available also from other parts of the Europe. And there was a Whinchat, which, according to my knowledge, was somewhere in between in this respect.

When searching for a study species it is probably not completely off, if you consider also how difficult it is in terms of data collection. Can you imagine working with a species, which is practically invisible more or less all of the time? Almost the whole process of data collection must be planned around birds that are first caught and tagged with transmitters, what itself is rather time consuming, not to say expensive. The Corncrake and Quail are typical birds of this kind. The Whinchat, on the other hand is quite different. It chooses the most exposed parts of the grassland and with a simple field scope you can watch it all day long, making notes about what it is doing, where it is doing,

with whom it is doing, where it delivers its prey (this helps you to locate the nest), etc. Having considered this, my selection of study bird was a no-brainer.

Please, do not understand me wrong. I do not want to advocate, that most easily studied birds should always be selected as a study object. Not at all! Even the birds that are notoriously difficult to study are part of biodiversity and we have to know as much as possible about them too. Still, when your goal is to study a problem, in particular, when this is a serious nature conservation problem, there is some logic in selecting a species which allow you to collect a lot of data in relatively short period, so that your conclusions and solutions can be delivered timely. And for the problem of birds on grassland, well, Whinchat seems just the best selection, at least from my point of view.

PS: spell checker helped me a lot, but it is not a magic tool.

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