# Short Communication

## Autumn Records of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (Bechstein, 1798) in Southeastern Anatolia, Turkey

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**Abstract**
The records of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* between 2003 and 2008 in Southeastern Anatolia were evaluated for the distribution of this species. The available records indicate that the distribution of the Marsh Warbler is restricted to a few localities, mainly during the autumn migration season.

### Introduction

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (Bechstein 1798) has a large distribution area which covers western Europe to western Asia. It breeds throughout central and western Europe (excluding the Iberian Peninsula) to southern Scandinavia and western Asia, including Turkey. It is a migratory Old World Warbler, wintering in southeast Africa (Cramp 1998). Central and eastern Europe constitutes over 75% of its global breeding range (BirdLife 2004). Although declines were reported for some European populations during 1990–2000, the breeding population there is very large (BirdLife 2004, 2009) and the species is evaluated as Least Concern by IUCN (2009).

There are different estimates about the size of the Turkish population: 1,000–10,000 (Kasparek & Bilgin 1996, Welch 2004) and 8,000–25,000 pairs (BirdLife 2004, Kılıç & Eken 2004). Marsh Warbler is a locally common summer visitor to the eastern Black Sea coastlands and East Anatolia (Kasparek 1992). Although, this species was reported as locally uncommon with possible and probable breeding records in Southeastern Anatolia (see Welch 2004), our information about population and distribution is unclear. The main purpose of this paper is to analyse the current status and distribution of Marsh Warbler in southeast Anatolia, based on observations and recent literature.

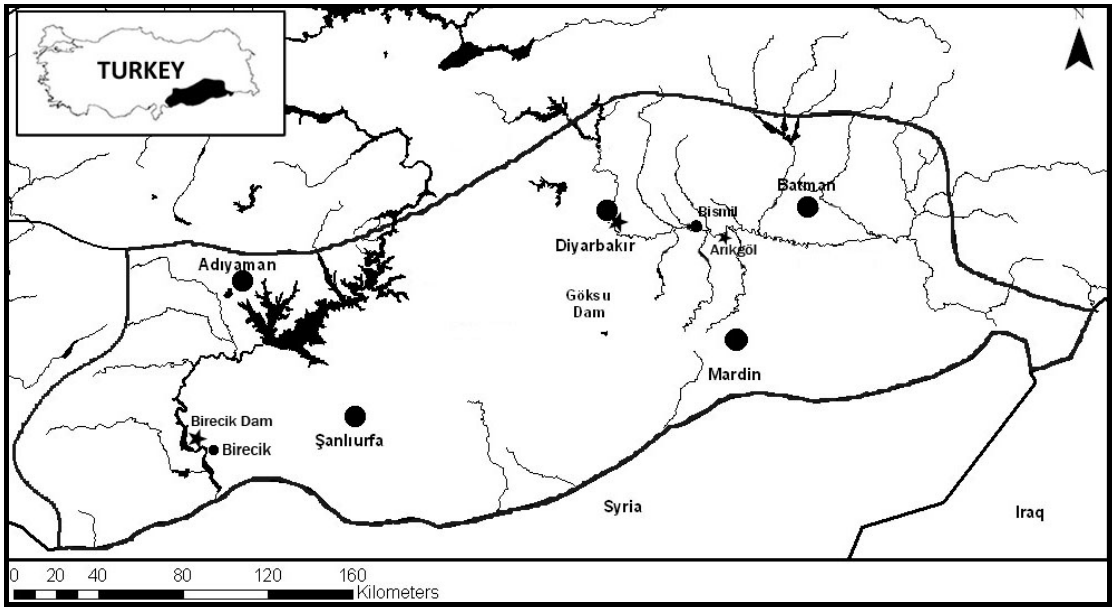


**Figure 1.** Map of study area; stars indicate localities where Marsh Warbler is recorded.

**Table 1.** Records of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* in South-eastern Anatolia between 2003 and 2008.

| Location | Dates | Individual Number | Source / Observer |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Dicle Ringing Station | 23 Sep–7 Oct 2003 | 12 | Filar & Biricik (2006) |
| *Dicle Ringing Station | 08 Sep–28 Oct 2004 | 6 | Filar & Biricik (2006) |
| *Dicle Ringing Station | 01 Sep–22 Oct 2005 | 26 | Filar & Biricik (2006) |
| Birecik Dam | 01 Oct 2004 | 2 | M. Ceyhan, İ. Elçi, H. Göktekin (Kuşbank 2009) |
| Near Dicle Ringing Station | 27 Sep 2005 | 2 | H.Deniz, R.Mungan |
| Arıkgöl | 14 Oct 2008 | 1 | R.Karakas |

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## Materials and Methods

The records of Marsh Warbler between 2003 and 2008 in Southeastern Anatolia were evaluated for the distribution of this species. Records were obtained from all published studies on the distribution of birds in the region. The records were evaluated and their localities were mapped for the distribution of species in the region (Fig. 1). Records are presented according to chronological order in Table 1.

## Results and Discussion

Marsh Warblers were recorded mainly from Birecik Dam, Tigris River – near Diyarbakır – and Arıkgöl – near Bismil. According to the results, it is reported mainly at 400–600 m a.s.l. The Tigris and Euphrates river systems together with their tributaries have suitable habitats for Marsh Warbler and thus probably have a determinative role on the migration of species in Southeastern Anatolia.

It is difficult to separate this species from the Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (Scott 2008). Marsh Warbler was recorded in the same area together with Reed Warbler during the same period and in the same habitats (Filar & Biricik 2006). Although, it may be difficult to distinguish the two species from each other due to their similarities, distinction can be made depending on the voice and morphological parameters. Marsh Warbler has no prominent red-brown uppertail and rump while Reed Warbler has. The head is slightly rounded with more grey-brown tone upperparts and it has a pure white throat and creamy underparts. The legs are flesh-coloured or yellowish pink in the Marsh Warbler. The upperparts of Marsh Warbler are generally brighter than those of Reed Warbler. Additionally, Reed Warbler is more common (Karakaş & Kılıç 2002, 2005) and breeding in some localities were reported (Karakaş 2009) while Marsh Warbler is not common in this part of the country.

Before the 1990s, Marsh Warbler was reported as 'status uncertain' with some records from different parts of the country (Beaman 1986, Martins 1989). Roselaar (1995) reported possible breeding records from the three localities in Southeastern Anatolia while most of the confirmed breeding records were reported from the East Anatolia region. Although there are records reflecting spring and autumn passage from different regions of the country, there are no spring records from Southeastern Anatolia region during the period in question, mainly 2004 and afterwards, notably including a ringing project that was conducted from 31 March to 24 April 2004 and three previous autumn works were conducted in the region during 2003–2005 periods (Filar & Biricik 2006). The available records reflect autumn migration in this part of the country with the exception of possible and probable breeding records during the 2001–2003 period (see Welch 2004). Welch (2004) mentions small numbers of summer migrants throughout region, but the results of this study indicate that distribution of Marsh Warbler is restricted to a few localities, mainly during the autumn migration season. In addition, while the autumn migration of the species in eastern Turkey was reported as occurring up to late September (Cramp 1998), these results suggest that this species passes through the Diyarbakır area until the middle of October. This situation may arise

from late migrant individuals. These limited data suggest that Marsh Warbler uses a variety of habitats, mainly near water in tall dense vegetation or in marshes around rivers (Cramp 1998) during autumn migration in the region.

The occurrence of this species is often related to the availability of suitable habitat including food resources. According to the GAP project a number of habitat and ecological changes have been done due to new agricultural regimes; for example the increase in irrigation meant that many steppe areas were converted to arable lands (Ünlü *et al*. 1997). Further monitoring will facilitate the detection of changes in bird populations and distributions in the region.

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