

Herrando, S., Rabaça, João E. & Boyla, Kerem A. 2020. *Sylvia melanocephala* Sardinian Warbler. In Keller, V., Herrando, S. Vorisek, P. *et al.* European Breeding Bird Atlas 2: distribution, abundance and change. Ed. European Bird Census Council & Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. Pp: 678-679.

EBBA2

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

The Sardinian Warbler is mainly distributed around the Mediterranean Basin, from the Iberian Peninsula and the Maghreb to the Anatolian Peninsula and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The subspecies *S. m. melanocephala* occurs in the most of the EBBA2 area but *S. m. leucogastra*, is found in the Canary Islands. It is mainly a resident species but individuals breeding in the coldest areas of its range often carry out short distance movements, mostly within the overall breeding range but sometimes reaching parts of Sahara and Arabia. Birds breeding around the Black sea are completely migratory [HBW].

The coverage in EBBA2 for this species can be considered as very good. The 50-km map shows its wide distribution in all the Mediterranean peninsulas and islands (even in the small ones). Only in parts of Turkey there are some potential gaps of coverage (e.g. in the S Mediterranean coast) that do not hinder the interpretation of the overall patterns of distribution. The Sardinian Warbler is the most generalist Mediterranean warbler, occurring in a great variety of habitats within its breeding range (Shirihai *et al.* 2001). This may explain its overall higher abundance at 50-km resolution compared to other Mediterranean *Sylvia* species in the heterogeneous Mediterranean landscapes. In addition, it may be one of the most common bird species (≥ 100 pair/km²) in the most favourable habitats such as in pine and oak open woods with rich understory or shrublands (Aparicio 2016). Lowest abundances are found in its northern extreme of its distribution, mainly around the Po valley (IT), northern Anatolia (TU) and Bulgaria. As shown by the Modelled map, Sardinian Warblers are particularly frequent in areas with mild winters, so mainly near the Mediterranean coast, where its role as seed disperser is relevant for many endemic Mediterranean plants (Herrera 1995).

The Change map shows clearly a northward expansion in the Atlantic coasts of Spain and SW France, the northern Spanish plateau, the Rhône-Saône valleys (FR) and S Bulgaria. This trend is consistent with climatic projections for this species [ClimAt]. Evidence that the species is also shifting upwards and colonising suitable habitats at relative high altitudes has been found in the Iberian Peninsula. Cyprus and Turkey were essentially not covered in EBBA1 and so the Change map does not include these areas. However, it is well documented that the Sardinian Warbler started to breed in Cyprus in 1994 and since then it has expanded to the most of the island, at least partially favoured by abandonment of agriculture and extensive grazing with consequent encroachment of vegetation (Ieronymidou *et al.* 2012). All these particular cases nicely demonstrates the main environmental drivers affecting positively this warbler, which are farmland abandonment and vegetation encroachment (Herrando *et al.* 2014) and climate change [ClimAt]. As a whole, so far, the species is considered stable in Europe [PECBMS].

Sergi Herrando, João E. Rabaça & Kerem Boyla

Word count: 3000 characters

- Aparicio, R. J. (2016). Curruca Cabecinegra – *Sylvia melanocephala*. In: Enciclopedia Virtual de los Vertebrados Españoles. Salvador, A., Morales, M. B. (Eds.). Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid.
<http://www.vertebradosibericos.org>
- Herrando, S, Anton, M., Sarda-Palomera, F., Bota, G., Gregory, R.G. & Brotons, L. 2014. Indicators of the impact of land use changes using large-scale bird surveys: Land abandonment in a Mediterranean region. *Ecological Indicators* 45: 235-244.
- Herrera C. M. 1995. Plant-Vertebrate Seed Dispersal Systems in the Mediterranean: Ecological, Evolutionary, and Historical Determinants *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 26: 705-727
- Ieronymidou, C., Collar, N.J, Doman, P.M. 2012 Endemic Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax* and colonizing Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* show different habitat associations. *Ibis* 154: 248-259.
- Shirihai et al. 2001.

FOR ACADEMIC USE ONLY