

SESSION: POSTER

YELLOWHAMMERS.NET: CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF YELLOWHAMMER (*EMBERIZA CITRINELLA*) SONG DIALECTS

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We present two citizen science projects focusing on mapping the geographic distribution of song dialects of Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*. This species is a good candidate for such studies: its characteristic song is easy to recognize even for an untrained ear (especially late in the season when other birds tend to be silent) and no specialised equipment is needed to record the song in sufficient quality for identification of dialects (most digital cameras and new mobile phones will do). Thus, even people without extensive ornithological experience or special devices can be involved in the research and with their help large amount of data, necessary for mapping, can be obtained. The Dialects of Czech Yellowhammers (DCY; www.strnadi.cz) project started in 2011, when the species was chosen as the Bird of the Year by the Czech Society for Ornithology. Its aim was to map dialect distribution in the Czech Republic and to find out whether a border between two European macrodialect groups (containing at least seven dialect types distinguished by the final phrase) runs through the Czech territory. During two years of DCY, with the help of over 120 people we obtained more than 1700 recordings covering most of the country, and detected not only all dialect types known so far but also additional local variants. Recording of yellowhammer songs enriched daily walks, bike trips, or family journeys of our volunteers. For some, collecting recordings from different places and seeing them appear on an interactive online map, became a real passion. Thanks to the success of DCY, we decided to expand abroad in 2013. The new Yellowhammer Dialects project (www.yellowhammers.net) aims to compare geographic distribution of dialects in Great Britain and New Zealand, with involvement of the public in both countries. Yellowhammers were introduced to New Zealand by British colonists in the second half of the 19th century and spread so rapidly that by the beginning of the 20th century they were regarded as serious pests. Data about numbers of introduced birds and localities of release are known; their origin can be assumed to be in the vicinity of three principal ports from which ships departed to New Zealand (London, Plymouth and Glasgow). The distribution of Yellowhammer dialects in the newly colonised territory may thus reflect both founder effects (thanks to substantial introduction bottlenecks) and subsequent cultural evolution during the biological invasion.