

months, there was no evidence of ‘in-chick, out-chick’ behaviour (Simmons 1970) while territorial defence by a juvenile grebe aiding its parents is unrecorded. Finally, the energetic cost of maintaining breeding plumage, defending a territory throughout the winter and provisioning two juveniles must have been considerable, possibly leading to reduced reproductive success in the following season (Low 2006; Low *et al.* 2015).

There are no previously published accounts of these behaviours in the Little Grebe. Research at the study site continues in the hope of establishing whether these behaviours are unique to a single pair of grebes, or if they represent more widespread but

hitherto unrecorded behavioural traits.

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Siberian Rubythroat eating Viviparous Lizard

On 6th August 2016, Lola Smirnova photographed a male Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* holding a juvenile Viviparous Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* in its beak (plate

000), in spruce *Picea* forest near Alambay railway station, Altai Krai, Russia. Nearby, a female Siberian Rubythroat with dependent fledglings was also noted; presumably the



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75. Male Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* with Viviparous Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Altai Krai, Russia, August 2016.

mate and offspring of the male. Owing to disturbance by people visiting the station, the male Rubythroat was regularly giving an alarm call and, instead of feeding the lizard to its chicks, it eventually swallowed it.

Over the next few days we returned to the site and obtained more photographs of the pair of Rubythroats feeding the fledglings. These revealed that they were feeding their young with terrestrial invertebrates including earthworms (Annelida) and millipedes (Myriapoda). It is well known that some passerine species include vertebrates within their diet, in particular the crows (Corvidae) and shrikes (Laniidae). Some thrushes *Turdus* will also include small lizards in their diets (Prokofyeva 2005). But the Muscicapidae are typically insectivorous and there appears to be no previous reference in the ornithological litera-

ture (e.g. Cramp 1988, Clement & Rose 2015, Collar 2017) to suggest that chats include lizards or other vertebrates in their diet.

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## Dipper predated by Lesser Black-backed Gulls

I am the weirs manager for the Teme Weirs Trust and this provides the opportunity for volunteer monitoring of the local Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* population on the River Teme at Ludlow, Shropshire. Several weirs have been restored along the river and fish passes installed where appropriate. At each of three weirs, I have installed nestboxes suitable for Dippers, which have been occupied annually since 2002, with many fledged young each year.

Along the Teme, Dippers are susceptible to predation by Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, and to minimise the risk I have sited nestboxes so they are not on a convenient flight-path. To the best of my knowledge, no Dippers from my boxes have been predated by Sparrowhawks, although newly fledged young are also vulnerable to Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*.

Since 2010, an increasing population of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* have

nested in the area, on a local factory roof. During the breeding season the gulls decimate the chicks of ducks (including some Goosanders *Mergus merganser*) and Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*, while in most years take some cygnets of the only nesting pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*.

The gulls have now discovered and begun to predate the Dipper population in an unexpected manner. While watching a Dipper feeding underwater and travelling upstream in the mill leat, a Lesser Black-backed Gull swooped down and caught it underwater, as it would a fish. It then took the Dipper (still alive) to a large, flat stone in the river where it was dismembered by two gulls, but not without putting up a considerable fight, and consumed in pieces by the pair.

In over 40 years of Dipper-watching and recording, I have not come across this behaviour before.

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