

NEW RECORD OF *CARNUS HEMAPTERUS* NITZSCH, 1818 (CYCLORRHAPHA: CARNIDAE) IN SPAIN

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ABSTRACT: The presence of 25 adult specimens of the dipteran *Carnus hemapterus* on a young barn owl, *Tyto alba* captured alive in spring time in Estiche, a village of the Huesca province, Aragón (Northeast of Spain) is reported.

KEY WORDS: *Carnus hemapterus*, *Tyto alba*, Spain, ectoparasite, Diptera.

The dipteran *Carnus hemapterus* Nitzsch, 1818 (Cyclorhapha: Carnidae) is a small fly, about 2 mm long, whose larva feeds upon organic debris in birds' nests. However, the adult fly has adopted a parasitic mode of life. An ectoparasite of nesting birds, once on its host it loses its wings and its abdomen becomes distended (ASKEW, 1973). Its diet is not definitively known. Some authors have reported its haematophagous behaviour (NOLLER, 1920; GUIGUEN & LAUNAY, 1990), but other works affirm that its only source of food is cutaneous secretions (MARSHAL, 1981).

This fly is widespread all over Europe and North America (ROTHERAY, 1989; WALTER, 1990), although the number of observations is not really very high due to its exclusive parasitism in young chicks in the nest (WALTER & HUDDE, 1987). This parasitism is not very specific and host choice depends mainly on ecological rather than phyletical relationships (GUIGUEN, LAUNAY & BEAUCOURNU, 1983). The most frequent hosts are four families of birds: falconiforms, strigiforms, piciforms and passeriforms.

In this study we record the discovery of this ectoparasite on one barn owl (*Tyto alba*), one of the bird species quoted by BÜTTIKER (1975) as acting as a host of this parasite. The specimen was a young barn owl in down that had been captured alive in spring time in Estiche, a village of the Huesca province (Northeast of Spain).

After checking the bird, 25 adult specimens of *Carnus hemapterus* were found, 23 of them were females without wings (19 of them engorged) and 2 were winged males. They were placed mainly on the axillary part, the usual location (GUIGUEN, LAUNAY & BEAUCOURNU, 1983).

This ectoparasite has been quoted only once in Spain by MUÑOZ LOPEZ *et al.* (1991), who found it in Aragón on Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and Lesser

Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) chicks but they did not specify the degree of parasitization.

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