

A Whinchat-Pair with fledglings in an unusual habitat

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Especially in the early 1990s the Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*) population in the Teuschnitzau / Northern Bavaria was investigated intensively (for example FEULNER & FÖRSTER 1995) whereat there was given a special attention to habitat selection. It turned out that tall forbs, single bushes and single trees were the favourite structures Whinchat pairs lead their fledged juveniles to. In contrast to that the Whinchats avoided the proximity to dense spruce forests.

On 22 June 2015 a male Whinchat sang from peripheral trees of a spruce forest which was

about 15-20 m high. It was very surprising to see that about 10-20 m within the forest there was a female Whinchat (Fig. 2) leading at least four fledged juveniles. The place the female Whinchat had chosen was a very small lighting (about 8x8 m) within a very dense spruce forest (Fig. 1). The next nest that could be recorded in 2015 was about 150-200 m away from this place. But it is unclear if the fledglings originate from that nest. The birds stayed in the spruce forest for at least three days. After that time the Whinchat family could not be found anymore.

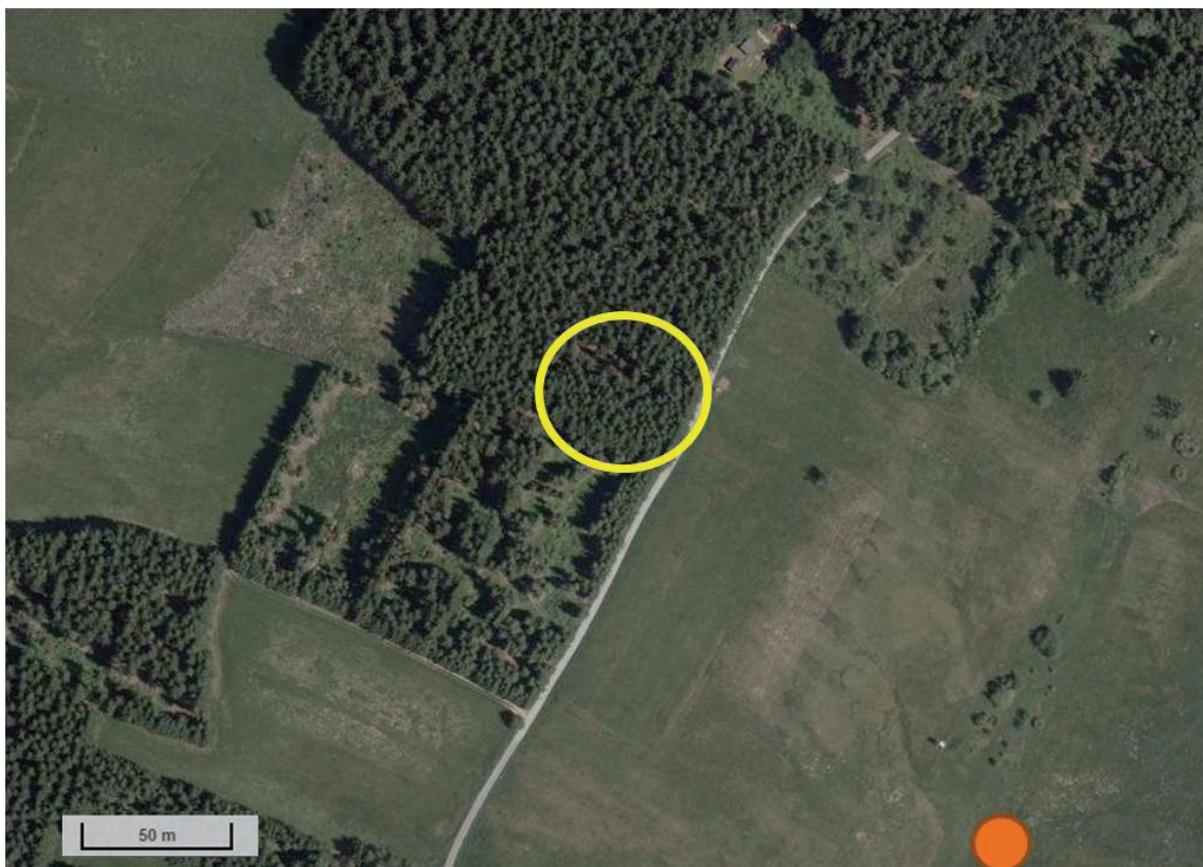


Fig. 1 : The part of the spruce forest the Whinchat family stayed for at least three days (yellow ring) and the place the nearest nest in 2015 was recorded (orange). The map has been taken from www.bayern-atlas.de.



Fig. 2: Both pictures show the female Whinchat in the spruce forest (Photos: © U. BRUHN-OTTE).

In the same year there was a special breeding constellation of Whinchats with a Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) which took function as a breeding helper (FEULNER et al 2016), so I took a lot of time for making observations in the area. It was remarkable how often foxes *Vulpes vulpes* were looking for food in the Teuschnitzaue even during the day. But it must remain speculation whether the Whinchat pair fled to the spruce forest to save his

fledglings from hunting foxes or other predators.

Literature

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