

Notes on the vocalizations of Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

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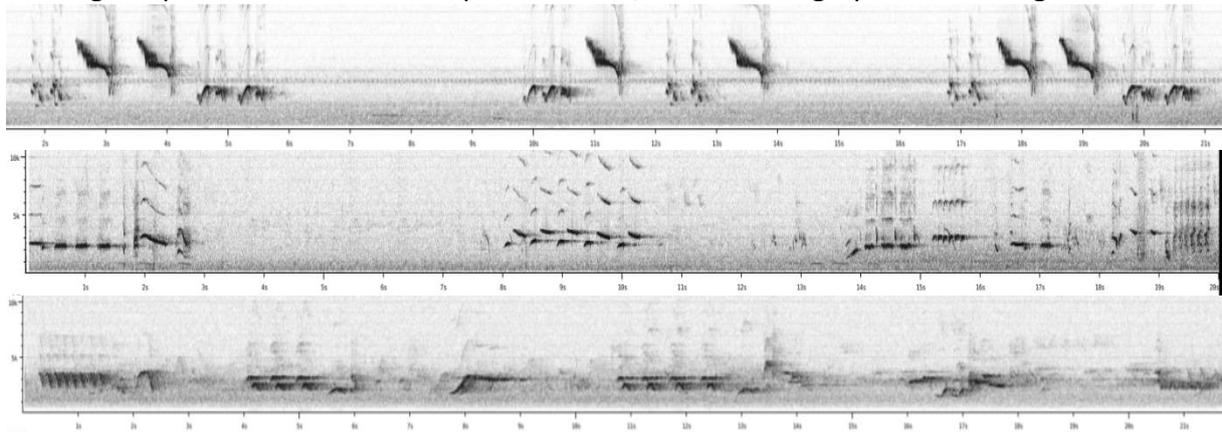
In the following we briefly analyze and compare voice of the different races of Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). We also try to quantify the extent of any vocal differences using the criteria proposed by Tobias *et al.* (2010), as a support for taxonomic review. We have made use of sound recordings available on-line from Xeno Canto (XC).

We are particularly interested to compare voice of races *mandarinus*, *sowerbyi* and *intermedius* with other races, as these have been suggested to merit full species rank (HBW Alive, Collar 2016).

An overview illustrated with sonograms:

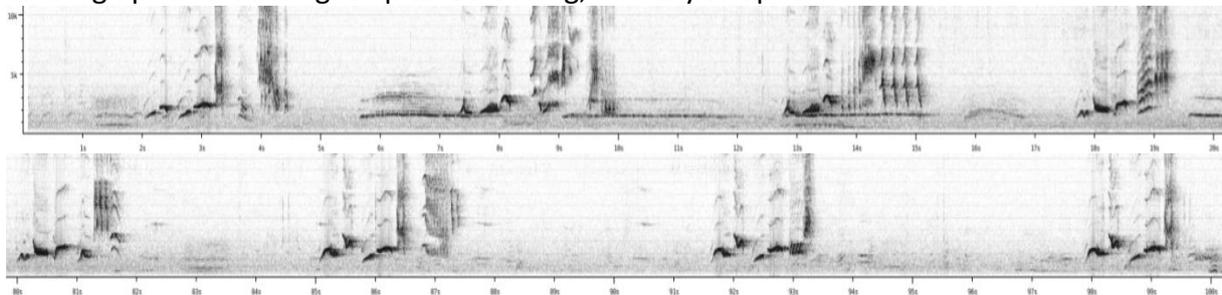
mandarinus/sowerbyi

All song strophes contain several repeated notes, and lack a high-pitched ending:



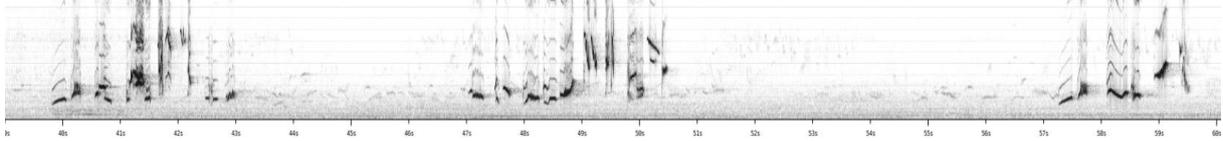
intermedius

Song sounds like a 'typical' Common Blackbird with different low-pitched whistles gradually building up towards a higher-pitched ending, in every strophe:

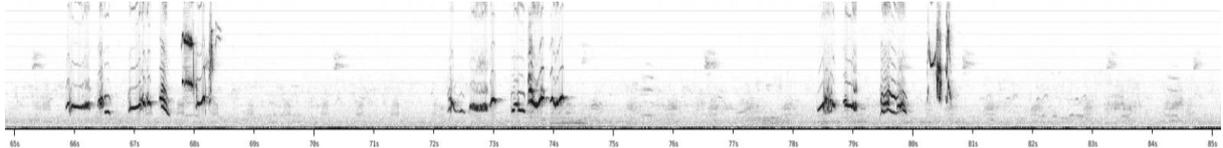


Other races for comparison:

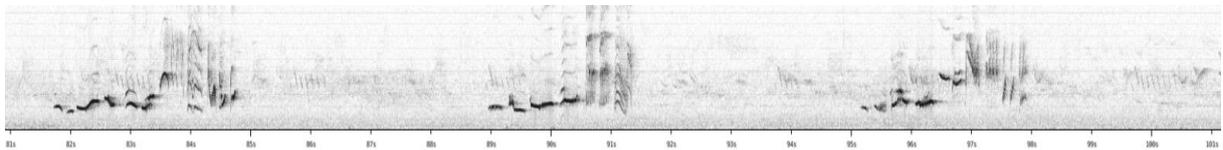
Germany



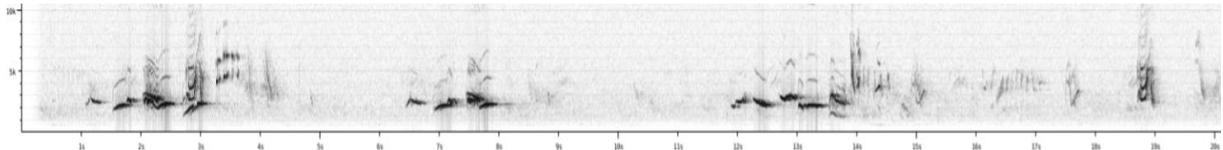
United Kingdom



Azores



Morocco



The vocal difference of races *mandarinus/sowerbyi* is striking in comparison with all other races (it is actually closer to Indian Blackbird *Turdus simillimus* vocally). *intermedius* on the other hand is vocally similar to other races.

Based on the much larger # of repeated notes per phrase (score 2-3) and the lack of a high-pitched ending to the song strophe (measured by average end. freq. or difference in frequency first part vs. last part of song strophe, score 2-3), *mandarinus/sowerbyi* could be given a total vocal score of about 5.

This note was finalized on 19th April 2016, using sound recordings available on-line at that moment. We would like to thank in particular the many sound recordists who placed their recordings for this species on XC.

References

Collar, N. (2016). Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. & de Juana, E. (eds.). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/58261> on 19 April 2016).

Tobias, J.A., Seddon, N., Spottiswoode, C.N., Pilgrim, J.D., Fishpool, L.D.C. & Collar, N.J. (2010). Quantitative criteria for species delimitation. *Ibis* 152(4): 724–746.

Recommended citation

Boesman, P. (2016). Notes on the vocalizations of Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). *HBW Alive Ornithological Note 304*. In: *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/1251760> on 14 October 2016).