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# BRITISH BIRDS RARITIES COMMITTEE



## RARITY REPORT FORM

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Species Ashy-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*  
Age/sex Male  
Date seen 9 April 2006  
Place  
Name Pentney Gravel Pits  
Grid reference TF714134  
County/recording area Norfolk

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Observer Peter M Wilson (PMW) and Dawn E Balmer (DEB)

Other observers Seen by several other birdwatchers later in the day and on 10th April  
Who first saw the bird? PMW  
Who first identified it? PMW and DEB  
Any who disagree? No  
Optical aids Leica 8x32 binoculars, Swarovski 20-60zoom x 60 telescope  
Distance from bird Down to 25m. Watched for 30 mins at various ranges  
Was the bird photographed? Yes  
Have the photographs been published? Yes, Birding World No. 232 (2006) p145  
Was the bird videoed? No  
Species present for comparison  
Which species were alongside the bird White Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Pied Wagtail  
Observer(s) experience of the species DEB has trapped for ringing large numbers (>700) of Yellow Wagtails in Lesbos, Greece including Black-headed Wagtail, Ashy-headed Wagtail, Grey-headed Wagtail and Blue-headed Wagtail. Also hybrids between Black-headed and Blue-headed Wagtail caught.

Observer(s) experience of similar species same day or previously Both familiar with Yellow Wagtail *M.f.flavissima*. Some experience of Blue-headed Wagtail *M.f.flava*, Grey-headed Wagtail *M.f.thunbergi* and Spanish Wagtail *M.f.iberiae* in Europe and small numbers of the former 2 races in Britain.

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Weather  
Wind direction North-easterly  
Force 3?  
Light conditions Moderate but bird was close  
Visibility Moderate  
Rain, mist, etc Rain  
Cloud cover 8/8

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Submitter (if different from above)  
Name/Address  
Contact telephone

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Description

A striking and stunning bird. Typical 'Yellow Wagtail' in general shape, size and structure.

Head: Crown and nape medium grey. From a little behind and just above the eye, then through the ear-coverts the grey was a little darker leading to the lores which could be described as sooty grey. A small square whitish fleck was visible behind both eyes. Clean white throat contrasted sharply against the yellow breast. When the bird was head-on this contrast was even across the meeting of throat/breast. Altogether the head pattern gave a passing resemblance to Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*.

Upperparts: Fairly bright olive-green mantle contrasted cleanly and evenly against the grey of the nape. Blackish median coverts showed broad white tips. The greater coverts appeared blackish brown with diffuse greyish white edges and broader white tips. Similarly blackish brown tertials showed contrasting whitish fringes. Tail blackish with white outer tail-feathers. Rump not seen well but thought to be similar colour to mantle.

Underparts: Bright yellow underside, from upper breast through to undertail-coverts. Difficult to assess intensity of colour against flavissima as direct comparison not achieved. Only 3 Yellows present initially and these soon dispersing.

Bare parts: Eye, bill and legs black.

Call: A rasping 'zreep' as opposed to the loud, clear 'tsee' of flavissima. The call (heard several times) was quite unlike flavissima and reminiscent of feldegg to our ears.

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