

A BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* RECOGNIZES ITS OWN SPECIES FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

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Riassunto - Aggressività di un Merlo *Turdus merula* verso una foto di un conspecifico. Viene descritto un caso di aggressività da parte di un maschio di Merlo *Turdus merula* nei confronti di una immagine fotografica di un individuo della sua specie presente in un pannello didattico.

Parole chiave - Merlo, aggressività intraspecifica

Abstract - A case of aggression by a male Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* towards a photographic image of a conspecific displayed on an educational panel is described.

Key words - Eurasian Blackbird, intraspecific aggression.

Some bird species can recognize their own species both in photographs, such as the Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* (e.g., Troje *et al.*, 1999; Uchino & Watanabe, 2014), and in mirror reflections, as observed for example in the Black-capped Chickadee *Parus atricapillus* (Censky & Ficken, 1982; Branch *et al.*, 2015) and the Great Tit *Parus major* (Kraft *et al.*, 2017); this recognition can trigger various behavioral responses, including aggression. In some species, there is even evidence of self-recognition in mirror reflections, as documented in Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* (Prior *et al.*, 2008), Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* (Soler *et al.*, 2014), Clark's Nutcracker *Nucifraga columbiana* (Clary & Kelly, 2016), and domestic chicken *Gallus gallus domesticus* (Hillemacher *et al.*, 2023).

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* is a species that exhibits intense intraspecific aggression during pair formation, including violent physical encounters (Snow, 1956; Burkhard, 1985; Cramp, 1988). Glutz von Blotzheim (1988) reports cases of Blackbirds attacking their own reflection in window glass, car headlights, and even a photograph. However, in the latter case, no bibliographic reference is provided.

On February 16, 2025, at 11:00 AM, in the Parco di Roma Golf Club, an area within the Parco di Veio and the Grande Raccordo Anulare surrounding Rome, a male Eurasian Blackbird repeatedly attacked a photograph depicting a male of its species. This image was selected among several photographs, including those of other bird species, displayed on an educational panel. This aggressive behavior persisted over the following days. The uniqueness of this behavior, only superficially described in previous literature, lies in the fact that it was directed toward a static, two-dimensional image of its own species.

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Supplementary material: The video recording of the described behavior is visible here <http://www.sropu.org/downloads/1234321.mov> (credits Elisabetta Gioannetti)