

Beak and skin abnormality in the Rook *Corvus frugilegus* observed in Poland

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On 6th and 17th of March 2021, near the valley of the Sokołówka River and the neighbouring housing estate in Łódź, central Poland, I observed an untypical Rook *Corvus frugilegus* individual (photo 1). The bird did not have the majority of feathers on its head and neck, with only some present on its forehead. Moreover, its beak was abnormally long, although it was not crooked, which is common in beak deformities. On the first occasion the Rook was seen in a bigger flock of other corvids, mainly other Rooks but also Jackdaws *C. monedula*. The individual was observed sitting with other Rooks on a tree branch, but after a while it was chased away and moved to another branch, away from the flock. The preening behaviour seemed normal, although the bird could only reach the lower parts of its chest due to abnormally long beak. After a while the flock moved to a nearby lawn, and the individual was seen foraging with other birds. The second observation, carried out a week later, enabled me to note some more details. The abnormal Rook individual was observed to use a tip of its beak to preen tail feathers, without the need of stretching its head. The tip of the beak was also used to turn over leaves, and it was precisely used while lifting food off the ground. In some cases during foraging the Rook was seen tilting its head a little bit, and sometimes it had to lean over to put a bigger



Fot. 1. Gawron *Corvus frugilegus* o nietypowym wyglądzie, Łódź, marzec 2021 (fot. Z. Zaradzka) – *Un-
typical Rook, Łódź, March 2021*

piece of food in the middle of the beak's length. The bill-wiping behaviour, characterized by prolonged movements, was also observed, providing further evidence that the Rook was fully aware of its beak length. It seems that in spite of its elongated beak, the individual did not have any problems with feeding, flying and preening, and got used to its long beak. Assuming that the bill of a typical Rook is 55 mm long (Cramp et al. 1994), the estimated length of that abnormal individual Rook's beak was about 120 mm. This estimation was achieved by comparing digital photos of healthy Rooks with photos of the abnormal individual I observed. It is unknown why this Rook lost its feathers, and why its beak became so elongated.

Streszczenie: Nietypowy dziób i upierzenie gawrona *Corvus frugilegus*. W dniach 6. i 17.03.2021 w dolinie rzeki Sokołówki w pobliżu Łodzi obserwowano gawrona *Corvus frugilegus* o bardzo wydłużonym dziobie i głowie zupełnie pozbawionej piór. Opisano zachowanie ptaka, które nie odbiegało od normy.

References

Cramp S., Perrins C.M., Brooks D.J. 1994. Handbook of the Birds of Europe the Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. 8: Crows to Finches. Oxford University Press, Oxford.