

ISRAEL JOURNAL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Formerly: Refuah Veterinarith

Published Quarterly:

Volume 75 • No. 2 • June 2020

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Printed in Israel by E. Oren Publisher Ltd.

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Front Cover: **BLACK BIRD** (*Turdus merula*)

The binomial name derives from two Latin words, *turdus*, "thrush", and *merula*, "blackbird". This bird breeds on the Mediterranean coast of southern Turkey south to Jordan, Israel and the northern Sinai. It is mostly resident, but part of the population moves southwest or west to winter. This species is monogamous, and the established pair will usually stay together as long as they both survive. Although the species is socially monogamous, there have been studies showing as much as 17% extra-pair paternity. The female incubates for 12-14 days before the altricial (hatched or born in an undeveloped state and requiring care and feeding by the parents); chicks are hatched naked and blind. Fledging takes another 10-19 (average 13.6) days, with both parents feeding the young. The common blackbird is the national bird of Sweden. The pictures of the cover were generously provided by Mr. Moshe Tachnai.