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BULGARIAN NATIONAL REPORT

EURING General Meeting

Chemnitz, Germany, August 2003

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1. Background

In Bulgaria bird ringing started in 1928 when the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre was founded at the Royal Natural History Institutes in Sofia. Among the first 17 marked birds were 3 Squacco Herons (*Ardeola ralloides*), 2 Little Egrets (*Egretta garzetta*), a Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) and 2 Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*). Soon afterwards the first recoveries were received: 2 Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) from the Island Korfu (Kerkyra) in Greece and Malta and also White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) from South Africa. Till the beginning of the Second World War more than 22000 birds were ringed in Bulgaria. About 240 recoveries were received (of 18 bird species) from a number of European and African countries.

During the War this part of the building holding the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre was totally destroyed by a bomb, as a result of the frequent air-raids. Hence all archives and database were lost.

Post-war reconstruction of the Centre was a hard and long process. The correspondence and ringing activity were restored in 1961. The Bulgarian Ornithological Centre started operating on a mass scale in mid-1970s and continued in 1980s – the number of ringed birds increased 65 times, reaching 35000 bird annually. A number of field stations and observatories started functioning – Rupite (1976), Atanasovsko Lake (1978), Belogradchik, Kaliakra, Dragichevo, Chernelka, Kyustendil, Lesovo, Stulpishte, Chelopechene, Dolni Bogrov.

The economic crash in Bulgaria after 1989 had especially negative influence on the activity of the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre. The lack of funds for mist-nets, maintenance of

the field stations, communication and consumables made the whole process of organizing the bird ringing very difficult. During the recent years except for a number of comparatively active ringers only the station "Atanasovsko Lake" is operating and only in autumn migration. Since 1998 bird ringing is also performed at the "Kalimok" field base, which is used for breeding of threatened species of birds with the purpose of subsequent restocking into nature.

Nowadays the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre functions as a separate department at the Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

2. Legal Framework

Ringing permits are still being provided by Institute of Zoology (BAS), by recommendation of the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre. However, after the Biodiversity Law (2002) came into use in Bulgaria and due to the adaptation of the national legislation to that of the European Union, some changes and uncertainties are expected to occur. Therefore we ask for detailed information all schemes, members of EURING, how this issue is regulated in their countries (license categories, legislation etc.)

Metal rings of Bulgarian Ornithological Centre are used all over the Bulgarian territory.

3. Staff

There have been several changes in the staff of Bulgarian Ornithological Centre during the last ten years. Head of the scheme is still **Prof., Dr.Sc.Biol. Dimitar Nankinov**. Since 1996 **Svetla Dalakchieva** has been working first as a technical assistant and after 1999 – as a biologist. In 2000 **Boris Nikolov** joined the scheme as a PhD student and now he is working as a biologist.

4. Ringers and Ringing Permits

Since the establishment of Bulgarian Ornithological Centre more than 700 ringers have been working voluntarily. Annually about 100 ringers work actively. Their geographic distribution is not even, they are concentrated in the bigger cities – Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, Varna, Stara Zagora. However, they travel a lot and this network of ringers covers a great part of the country. Most of the ringers are specialized in marking only passerines.

To acquire for a ringing permit the person must pass a ringing course and an exam at the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre. Usually a ringer is given a permit after 1-2 (at least) visits at some of the field stations and following recommendations of two licensed ringers.

5. Rings

There are 11 types of rings in use. In addition, large-sized rings are going to be prepared in the frame of the Action Plan for the Recovery and Conservation of Vultures in the Balkans and Adjacent Regions. The ringers do not pay for the rings.

6. Ringers Courses

In 1988 the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre started running a School of Ornithology and Nature Conservation at the Institute of Zoology entirely on a voluntary basis. For 9 months each year about 30 young people are given theoretical lectures on bird identification as well as some general notes on their biology, ecology, distribution and taxonomy. Up to several times per month (depending on the season) they can practice bird ringing around Sofia under the guidance of experience ornithologists.

7. Data Management

No ringing data is computerized as we lack suitable software, as well as computer with enough memory and power.

8. Ringing Projects

- Regular monitoring and ringing during the autumn migration in a coastal lagoon – Atanasovsko Lake, classified as a Ramsar place and Important Bird Area.
- Colour ringing of Wood Sandpiper, *Tringa glareola*, under the leadership of Magda Remisiewicz from the University of Gdansk.
- This year (2003) we received coloured plastic rings for marking Spoonbills in the frame of an international project for establishing the East-European flyway of the European Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*) headed by Otto Overdijk (EUROSITE).

9. Ringing Activity

The number of ringed birds show a strong decrease in the early 90ies in comparison with the previous decade (Figure 1). This was mainly due to the economic crash in the country – many of the bird observatories and field stations were destroyed, people had less opportunities and time to travel and ring birds. During the next years the mist-nets and other ringing equipment gradually worn out, which led to a decrease in the number of the ringed birds.

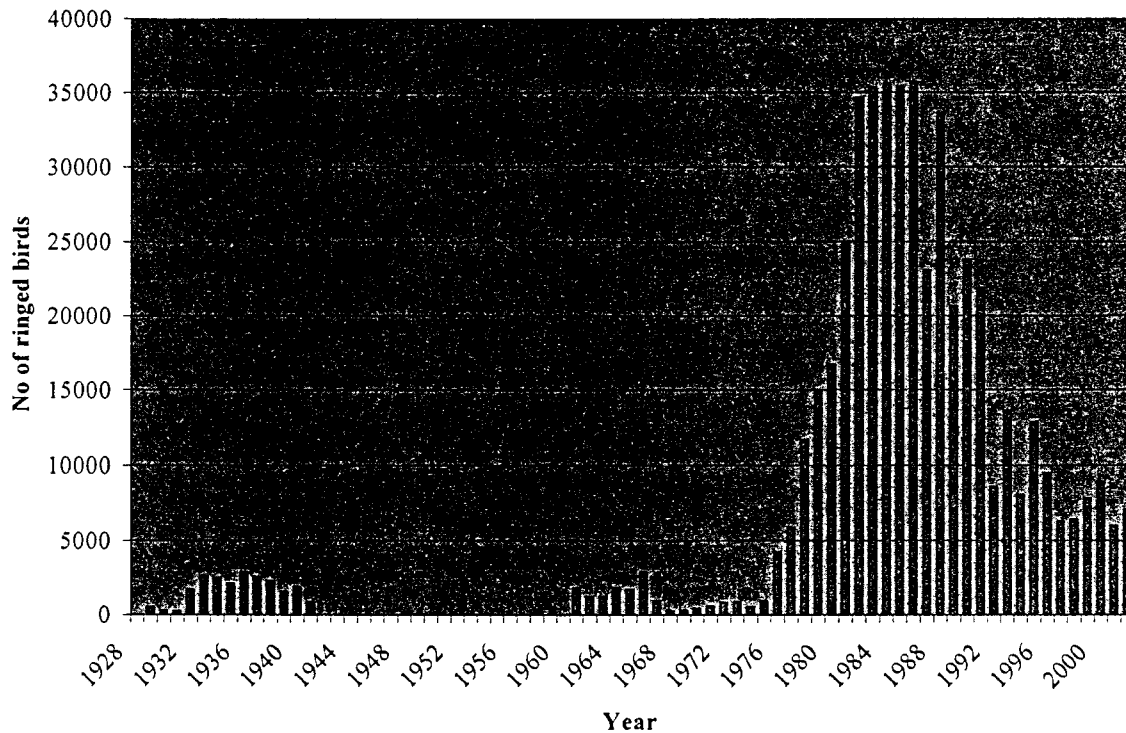


Fig. 1. Number of birds ringed in Bulgaria since the establishment of the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre (1928 – 2002).

We are sure that Bulgarian Ornithological Centre is not the only ringing scheme in South-Eastern Europe facing serious problems when organizing and performing their main tasks. One of the ways for helping these ringing schemes could be their involvement into international ringing projects on a wider scale or simply by sending them some of the old, but still useful mist-nets and ringing equipment.

Acknowledgements:

During the last years Bulgarian Ornithological Centre received some help from colleagues from other Ringing Schemes and Organizations. In 2000 we received 10 mist-nets from the Danish Ringing Scheme. This year Prof. Busse (Bird Migration Research Station, University of Gdansk) produced especially for our Centre 5000 rings for small birds. And last but not least, we are thankful to the organizers for the financial support in attending both conferences in Chemnitz.

We would like to express our gratitude to these colleagues who supported Bulgarian Ornithological Centre.