

EURING GENERAL MEETING 2013

Congress Hotel Sofia, Helsinki

Report of the Helsinki Ringing Centre (Finland)

Organization

The Ringing Centre belongs to the Monitoring Team, which is one of the five teams of the Zoology Unit at the Finnish Museum of Natural History (Luomus), University of Helsinki.

Catching permits of birds are issued by 13 Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (protected species) and by the Finnish Wildlife Agency (game species). The length of the license period is 5 years.

The personnel of the Ringing Centre consists of senior curator (Jari Valkama), coordination curator (Markus Piha), IT manager (Jörgen Palmgren) and three senior museum technicians (Juha Honkala, Petteri Lehikoinen and Seppo Niiranen). We also have one PhD-student (Heidi Björklund) who is preparing her doctoral thesis on the bird of prey monitoring data.

Rings

We acquire our rings from Aranea and to a lesser extent from I. Ö. Mekaniska AB for all species except the Black Cormorants whose rings we order from Porzana. At the moment, there are a total of 26 ring sizes of differing diameter in use, but due to use of both aluminium and steel rings the number of different ring types amounts to 36.

Ringers, numbers of birds ringed and number of recoveries

We have approximately 620 licensed ringers of which approximately 520 use their license every year. The proportion of women is only 8 %, but has been growing constantly.

Since 1913, more than 10.5 million birds have been ringed in Finland. The top 3 species are the Great Tit (981,000), the Pied Flycatcher (655,000) and the Willow Warbler (606,000). In 2012, a total of 192,834 birds got a Finnish ring.

There are now more than 1.1 million recoveries of Finnish birds, but many of them are less interesting recaptures or resightings from the same site within a couple of days. When these are omitted, approximately 537,000 “interesting” recoveries remain.

Database

All ringing data since 1974 and all recoveries (and associated ringing data) are computerized.

Nowadays some 95% of ringing and recovery data from ringers come in electronic format. We have developed an electronic archive in which all original ringing and recapture files sent to us by the ringers are stored. The purpose of this service is (i) to preserve original raw data (so that potential errors can be later traced) and (ii) to reduce

the amount of space needed for excessive paper copies. The ringers can retrieve recovery reports of the birds they have ringed from a web server. This has remarkably reduced our mailing and handling costs. We are grateful for Jarno Lehtimäki, Jan Lindström, Mikko Pelkonen, Esko Piirainen, Petrus Repo, Lauri Savolainen and Heikki Lokki for their invaluable help and expertise with the planning and construction of databases.

Finance

We have been able to keep both rings and ringing permits free of costs for all ringers. Rings are paid from the budget of the Zoology Unit, and the annual costs have been approx. 10,000 euros.

Projects

- CES
- Monitoring of birds of prey
- The Finnish Bird Ringing Atlas. The first part was published in 2013 and we hope that the second (and last) part would be ready in the beginning of 2014.
- Colour ringing (e.g. Common Crane, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Curlew, Rook, Jackdaw, Siberian Jay)
- Barn Swallow (we still continue this as a domestic project)

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