



Bulgarian Ornithological Centre
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Scheme

Sofia (Bulgaria) bird ringing scheme is officially coordinated by the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre (BOC), which is a separate department at the Institute of Zoology within the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Staff

Prof. Dimitar Nankinov (1 full-time scientific); Head of the scheme
Dr. Svetla Dalakchieva (1 full-time scientific)
Dr. Boris Nikolov (1 full-time scientific)

Short history

Bird ringing started in Bulgaria back in 1928 when the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre was founded at the Royal Nature History Institutes. Since 1947 it is part of the Institute of Zoology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Red-rumped Swallow (*Hirundo daurica*) was chosen as logo of BOC in 1980.

Until the early 1990s bird ringing was performed in Bulgaria on a regular basis at two ringing stations and about ten bird observatories. The subsequent economic crash led to their abandonment and to 4-5-fold reducing of ringing activities (see the graph in “Activity” chapter below), as well as to break down of the network of volunteer-collaborators. During the recent years the situation is gradually and slowly improving in terms of yearly totals of ringed birds.

Ringers & stations

The average annual number of ringers who are ringing more or less regularly and actively is about 50, though more than 700 ringers and voluntary collaborators have been listed in the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre database since the mid-1970s.

Ringing permit is given to persons who have worked actively at least two seasons at a ringing station and have positive recommendations of at least two experienced ringers. The attitude of the candidates to living birds kept in hand is also taken into account. System of grading the ringing permits is not developed.

The ringers are licensed on the base of permissions issued by the Ministry of Environment and Water (see below “Difficulties & problems”).

Currently the only ringing station of BOC is “Atanasovsko Lake” along the Black Sea Coast where bird ringing is done during migration only, mainly in autumn. Regular (migration-based) bird ringing activities are also performed at “Kalimok” Biological Experimental Station (at the Institute of Zoology) along the Danube, which takes part in the Southeastern Bird Migration Network (SEEN).

Rings & other equipment

Bulgarian Ornithological Centre at the Institute of Zoology (BAS) provides metal rings for all activities involving ringing of wild birds in Bulgaria. BOC also handles all recoveries of metal rings within the country.

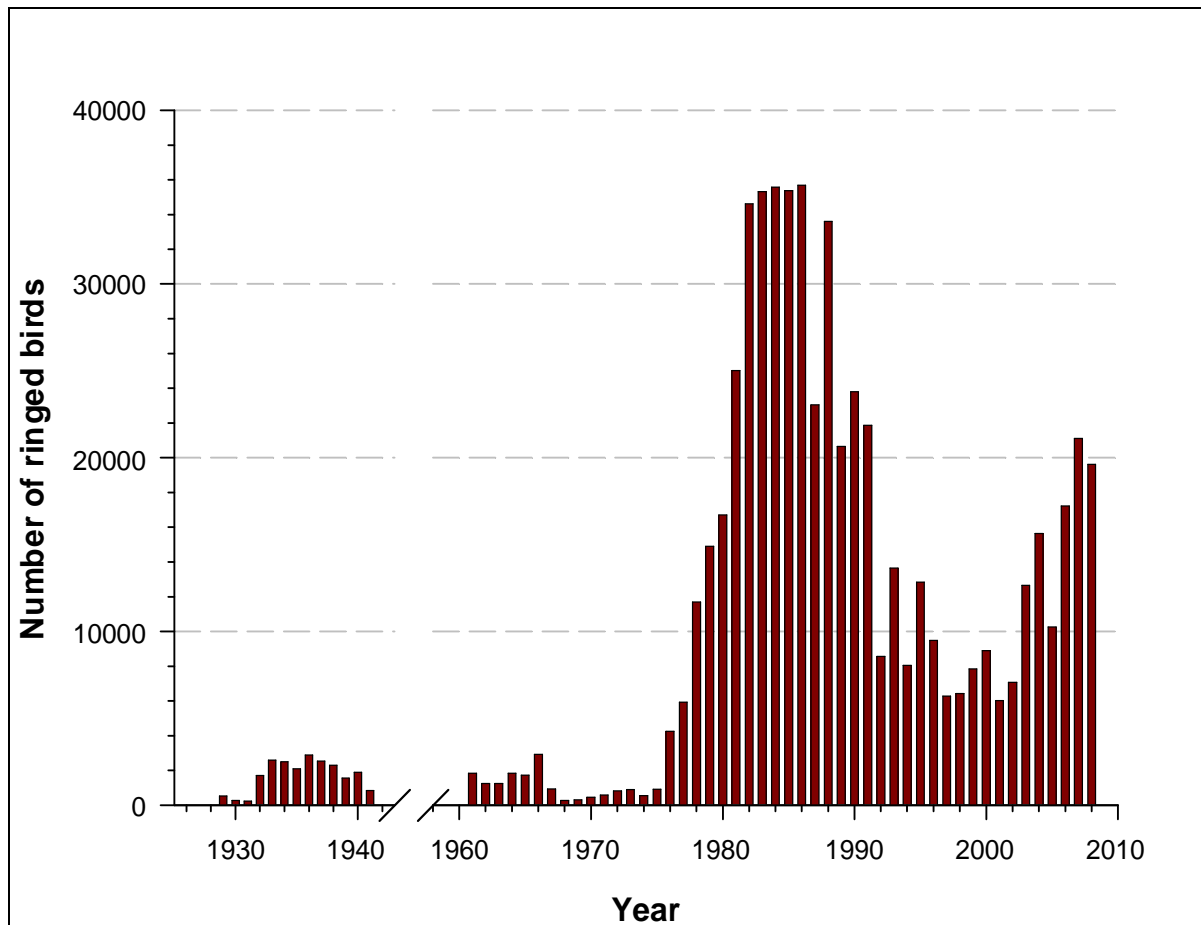
Currently 15 ring sizes are in use. The rings are made in Bulgaria (ring-producing machine was constructed and used in the 1980s, but no more after 1987), and by Mekaniska (Sweden), Aranea (Poland) and Porzana Ltd. (UK)*. Ringers do not pay for the rings.

Colour ringing. Regular contacts exist with the international coordinators in relation to the projects run by BOC, as well as with the local coordinators based in various NGOs responsible for running colour-marking projects (Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Eastern Imperial Eagle).

Activity

At least 608362* birds of more than 230 species have been ringed since 1928.

Based on 2003-2008 data, “Atanasovsko Lake” ringing station holds 32.3-54.8% of all ringed birds per year, and the group of ringers in Bourgas taken as a whole – 43.7-82.8%. In general, most numerous species ringed are Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*), Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*), Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*), Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*), Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) etc.



About 40% of the ringing data and all foreign recoveries from the last 5 years (2003-2008) are computerized (*Excel* base). Unfortunately the bulk of the data is still handled manually. It is a high priority to obtain suitable software for handling all ringing and recovery data.

* We express our sincere thanks to Aranea Ltd. and the Wetland Trust for the generous donation in the form of bird rings for the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre in 2007 and 2009!

** Some ringing data from 2008 and several preceding years still to be submitted by some ringers.



After a long-year break the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre renewed publication of the annual ringing reports in a *Bird Ringing Bulletin* in 2008, which is the successor of the *Bird Banding Bulletin* published for the last time in 1989 and containing the reports for 1985-1986. The 2008 issue (No 11) holds the ringing reports for 1987-1988.

One of the priorities in BOC work is to raise funds in order to publish the remaining ringing reports from 1989 to date.

Difficulties & problems

Bulgarian Ornithological Centre has not financial possibility to supply the ringers with mist-nets, pliers, balances etc. On the other hand, due to the low living standard in the country ringers also cannot afford purchasing ringing equipment. Only on a very irregular basis small amount of equipment is purchased within projects dealing with nature conservation (run by NGOs) or scientific research (run by academic bodies).

The BOC ringing station “Atanasovsko Lake” is maintained largely on a voluntary basis. It is a very old pump station with some basic conditions (no electricity and water) located in the industrial part of the salines used for salt-production. The station is used by BOC under a non-official agreement with the Saltfactory Bourgas and the lack of clarity in relation to the ownership prevents us from putting considerable investment into the building.

The lack of funding prevents us from publication of the annual reports on a regular basis in the *Bird Ringing Bulletin*.

Although BOC put considerable effort to suggest an article regulating the activity of BOC and the way of issuing ringing permits during the process of Biodiversity Act elaboration, it was finally published in 2002 without such an article. In order to license ringers BOC apply for permissions at the Ministry of Environment and Water. Each application should include number and names of ringers, place and period of ringing, as well as list of species and numbers of birds by species, which are expected to be ringed (?!). In addition, the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water has to be informed about dates of ringing to be able to control the bird species and their predicted numbers listed in the permission... For each application an administration fee has to be paid and given the financial constraints and the number of applications for different ringers and places in the course of a year BOC is often in a very complicated situation in terms of ensuring the ringing activities.

We respect law, but as a result of all this combined BOC often does more bureaucracy than ringing...

For the last 1.5 years BOC worked at reduced staff (and most probably will continue so until 2010 spring) because of the impossibility to be appointed person, due to budget shortage in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, substituting Dr. Dalakchieva who is on maternity leave.

August 2009
Sofia