

# **EURING GENERAL MEETING**

**Strasbourg 2005**

## **Report of the Helsinki Ringing Centre (Finland)**

### **Organisation**

Ringing Centre is situated at the Zoological museum which belongs to the Finnish Museum of Natural History. Every fifth year the Ringing Centre has to apply catching and ringing permits from the Ministry of Environment and from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The licenses for 2003 -2007 have been renewed at the end of 2002.

At the moment, the personnel consist of director (Jari Valkama), secretary (Päivi Kare) and four assistants (Jukka Haapala, Seppo Niiranen, Pekka Puhjo and Jarmo Ruoho). The assistants have specialised in slightly different topics and questions (e.g. input and maintenance of ringing & recovery data, correspondence with ringers and the public, administrative tasks, etc.). In addition, we have one research assistant (Heidi Björklund) whose funding mainly comes from the Finnish Ministry of the Environment and who is responsible for running the project to monitor Finnish bird of prey populations.

### **Rings**

We acquire our rings from Mekaniska AB, Sweden for all birds except the Black Cormorants whose rings are made by Porzana, UK. At the moment, we have a total of 26 ring sizes (as indicated by the diameter of the ring) in use, but the total number of different ring types amounts to 36.

### **Ringings and recoveries**

During 2004, a total of 217 542 birds were marked with a Finnish ring (2003: 251 328). Since 1913, altogether more than 8.8 million birds have been ringed in Finland and we are expecting to break the limit of 9 million birds during 2005. There are now more than 875 000 recoveries of these birds, but many of them are less interesting retraps from the same site within a couple of days. When these are omitted, there are approx. 410 000 "interesting" recoveries left. Some longevity records from 2004 perhaps deserve to be mentioned here: the Smew *Mergus albellus* (7 years), Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (16 years and 2 months), Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (14 years), Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (16 years), White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* (15 years 9 months), and Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* (16 years and 2 months). One recovery of Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* is also worth mentioning: this young female was ringed in Karjaa, southern Finland 16 June, 2004 and it was caught and released 25 October, 2004 in Switzerland. This is the first foreign recovery of Finnish Hawfinch.

### **Database**

All ringing data since 1974 and all recoveries (and associated ringing data) are in electronic form. Older ringing data (1913-1973) are being stored, but the work is slow as it demands extreme care and patience. Nowadays perhaps 80% of ringing and recovery data from ringers come in electronic format.

A specific e-mailing list for ringers (“ringer-network”) was established around two years ago, and now there are around 210 members in this service. The purpose of the list is to increase communication and exchange of information between ringers.

### **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 Zoological Museum, and the annual costs have been approx. 18 000 euros. However, this sum has been growing gradually year after year due to use of more expensive steel rings and also due to increased ringing numbers.

### **Problems**

A major challenge for the Ringing Centre and for the entire Zoological Museum in the near future is the thorough reparation of the old museum building during the next two years (2006-2007). In practice this means that we will have to move to another place already in late September 2005. The most critical period will be the last week of September and the first week of October when the moving will take place. During this intense “migration” it is possible that we will temporarily be without internet connection for short period(s) of time and therefore we may be unable to immediately answer queries sent to us by email. Thereafter we should be able to work in a normal way, although small delays may naturally occur. Our contact details are expected to remain the same as before.

### **Projects**

- **Monitoring of birds of prey.** We have long-term species-specific projects for Golden and White-tailed Eagles, Ospreys, Peregrines and Gyrfalcons. Other raptors and owls have been monitored since 1982 in a project called *Raptor Grid*; since 1986 the collection of data was further intensified through *Raptor Questionnaires*.
- **CES.** In 2004, 38 ringers took part in this project at 27 different sites in 23 municipalities.
- **Barn Swallow.** Since 1997 (which was a pilot year in Finland), altogether 45 000 chicks and 115 000 full-grown individuals have been ringed.
- **The Finnish Ring Recovery Atlas** is under construction and we hope to see something concrete during the next two years.
- **Bird observatories.** At the moment, we have 13 bird observatories in which 40 000 - 50 000 birds are ringed every year.
- **Smaller projects:** Dunnocks (during autumn migration) and Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks (from late autumn to early spring).
- **Update of the Ringer’s Manual.** The last edition of the manual is from 1984 and we hope to get the updated version during 2006 at the latest.

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