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GEESE *ANSER* SPP. IN NORTHEASTERN SLOVENIA DURING AUTUMN AND WINTER

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Abstract. During the winter three species of geese (*Anser anser, A. albifrons, A. fabalis*) are common in Slovenia. The most common species which overwinter is *A. fabalis*. The most important site for this species is Ormož reservoir on the river Drava where up to 3200 individuals can be observed.

Key words: geese, *Anser*, river Drava, Slovenia, wintering, number.

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Гуси в Северо-Восточной Словении осенью и зимой. - М. Вогрин. - Беркут. 13 (2). 2004. - Три вида гусей рода *Anser* (серый, белолобый и гуменник) обычны в Словении во время зимовки. Наиболее многочислен из зимующих гусей гуменник. Важнейшим местом зимовки для этого вида является водохранилище Ормож на р. Драва, где наблюдалось до 3200 особей.

1. Introduction

Distribution and numbers of geese in Slovenia during winter are satisfactorily known (Sovinc, 1994 and references therein). This paper presents the numbers and distributions of geese observed in Slovenia during autumn and winter with special attention paid to the only regular wintering site for geese in the country.

2. Study area and methods

In northeastern Slovenia, agricultural landscapes prevail in the lowland. The area belongs to the sub-Pannonic phytogeographical area (Marinček, 1987). The climate is modified Continental (Furlan, 1990).

The Ormož reservoir on the river Drava, which is the most stable site for geese in Slovenia, covers approximately 300 ha (46°23'N, 16°11'E) and is one of the largest reservoirs in the country. The reservoir is situated in northeastern Slovenia on the border with Croatia.

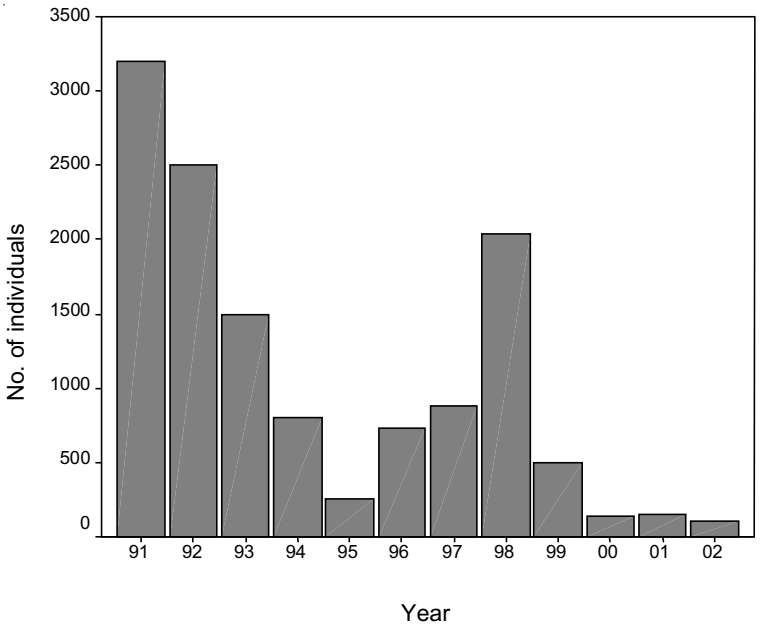
3. Results and discussion

Four species of geese *Anser* spp. (*Anser anser, A. albifrons, A. fabalis, A. brachyrhynchus*) can be seen in Slovenia; however, Pink-footed Goose (*A. brachyrhynchus*) occurs very rarely (Sovinc, 1994). Geese occur in both freshwater and marine areas; nevertheless, in marine areas geese are rare (Škornik et al., 1990). In general, geese are concentrated in northeastern Slovenia. The estimated midwinter population of geese in northeastern Slovenia between 1991 and 2002 are as follows: Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) up to 500, Bean Goose (*A. fabalis*) between 250 and 3200 and White-fronted Goose (*A. albifrons*) up to 250 individuals. The distribution of geese is similar over the years, with more than 90 % occurring in one main area, i.e. the river Drava.

During surveys geese were regularly recorded in September and October when a few birds were observed elsewhere (pers. obs.). In almost all areas where observation was carried out the numbers of geese increase from autumn to winter. However, Greylag Goose is much more common during autumn migration. Migrating flocks were observed first of all in October, November, December and March. They feed mainly on fields of winter cereal and on meadows. Numbers of Bean and White-fronted Geese were generally larger during January and February than in December. The same phenomenon was observed elsewhere. Small numbers of the Greenland White-fronted Goose (*A. a. flavirostirs*) and the Taiga Bean Goose (*A. f. fabalis* were) also recorded in northeast Slovenia (pers. obs.).

In all years, large numbers of geese, particularly Tundra Bean (*A. fabalis rossicus*) and White-fronted Geese (*A. a. albifrons*), were recorded on Ormož reservoir. It is the only

regular night roost for geese in Slovenia (Sovinc, 1994; Vogrin, 1995). The time of autumn/winter arrival probably depends on weather conditions in the northern areas, but the arrival takes place throughout December and early January. Geese aggregate to roost at night shortly before dusk, the last flocks arriving when it is almost completely dark.



Average numbers of Bean Geese at the Ormož reservoir in 1991–2002 during December – February.
Средняя численность гуменника на водохранилище Ормож в 1991–2002 гг. в декабре – феврале.

The value of the Ormož reservoir is twofold: it is a resting place for migrating birds and a site for wintering of aquatic birds (mainly ducks, geese and Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)) (Bibič, 1988; pers.obs.). The importance of the site for waterfowl breeding is negligible because of the lack of vegetation on the reservoir.

Nevertheless, aquatic birds suffered from substantial disturbance during winter, caused mainly by hunting by foreign (Italian) hunters (Vogrin, 1996). The consequences of the disturbance are probably indicated by the declining number of Bean and White-fronted Geese. At the end of the 1990s, flocks of three to four thousand Bean Geese often roosted at Ormož reservoir during January and February. During the last few years, flocks averaged only about 250–900 birds, and flocks occurred much less frequently (Figure). Decreasing numbers of Bean Geese are statistically significant ($r_S = –0.81$, $P < 0.01$, $n = 12$). Numbers of White-fronted Geese declined even more (Vogrin, 1996). For example, in the 1990s up to 1500 White-fronted Geese roosted in this area (Sovinc, 1994; pers. obs.), whereas in the last few years only small flocks were present (up to 200 birds). On the other hand, numbers of White-fronted Geese also decreased in other areas in Central Europe, if we compare data from Timmerman et al. (1976), Cramp, Simmons (1977), Dick (1990) and Madsen (1991). A strong decrease was ascertained particularly in the Pannonian area (Mooij, 1996).

Overall, the Ormož reservoir is of great importance as a goose wintering site, particularly for Bean Goose. The region is of international importance for this species in Central Europe, if we compare data from Cramp, Simmons (1977) and Komdeur (1992).

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Замітки	Беркут	13	Вип. 2	2004	204

ГНІЗДУВАННЯ СТЕПОВОГО КАНЮКА НА ЛІВОБЕРЕЖНІЙ ДНІПРОПЕТРОВЩИНІ

Breeding of the Long-legged Buzzard in east part of Dnipropetrovsk region. - M.A. Listopadsky - Berkut. 13 (2). 2004. - A nest was found near the village of Popasne (48.49 N, 35.32 E) in Novomoskovsk district in 2003. [Ukrainian].

Під час проведення досліджень на базі Присамарського біосферного стаціонару КЕДУ ім. О.Л. Бельгарда, в одній з балок басейну середньої течії р. Самари 2.04.2003 р. було знайдено гніздо степового канюка (*Buteo rufinus*). Неподалік знаходиться с. Попасне Новомосковського р-ну.

Гніздо розташоване в балці Бражина (урочище Чернушино), на узліссі байрачного лісу у відгалуженні балки, на дубі (*Quereus rubur*) на висоті 9 м. Побудоване на скелетних гілках біля стовбура дерева. В лотку знайдено шматки картону 5 х 5 см, папір (обгоротку з пляшки), уривок поліетилену приблизно 50 х 60 см, частково вбудованого в гніздо, яке складається переважно з гілок дуба. Розміри гнізда (см): висота – 65, діаметр гнізда – 75, глибина лотка – 13, діаметр лотка – 30.

В гнізді знайдено 3 яйця, забарвлення їх характерне для канюків. Одне яйце має тьмяні плями на відміну від інших двох з більш яскравим і чітко вираженим забарвленням. При обстеженні гнізда птахи літали з криками над лісом. Слід відмітити, що неподалік місця гніздування пари ведеться випас овець, на подібний випадок звертає увагу і В.В. Ветров (2002). 27.09.2003 р. неподалік гнізда при повторному обстеженні було знайдено молодого степового канюка, вбитого браконьєрами. Після визначення, череп птаха був переданий в ДПМ НАН України (м. Львів).

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