

Dombrovski V.C., Tishechkin A.K., Zhuruuliov D.V., Dzmitranok M.G., Pinchuk P. K. Breeding records of Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) in Central Paliessie.// Subbuteo. Vol.3. №1. - P. 3-13.

During surveys at two plots in central Paliessie in 1999, nine breeding pairs of Greater Spotted Eagles (GSE) were discovered. Breeding was monitored at seven nesting territories. Zhitkovitchi plot (Hemel Region) encompasses 120 km<sup>2</sup> of deciduous and mixed forests in the Pripyat floodplain and surrounding lowland meadows, fen mires and open drained wetlands. Two territorial pairs of Greater Spotted Eagles were recorded in this plot. Breeding density was 1.7 pair/100 km<sup>2</sup> of total plot area and 2.5 pair/100 km<sup>2</sup> of forested area. The ratio of GSE to Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*, LSE) numbers at the Zhitkovitchi plot was 1 : 4-5. The area where most of the spotted eagle pairs, including both GSE pairs, were observed (about 40 km<sup>2</sup>) has the highest water levels and is the least exposed to any human impact. Moreover, one more pair with a fledgling was discovered ca. 25 km from the plot in September 1999. This discovery indicates that GSEs are a regular breeding species in this region.

Olmany Mire plot (Brest Region) (150 km<sup>2</sup>) is situated within a vast mosaic of bogs, fens and transitory mires, with a large number of scattered small forest islands covered by pine or black alder stands. In total, 6 GSE breeding pairs were recorded in this plot during the survey and 5 GSE nests were found in April-August. One nest was found in a narrow strip of dry pine forest in an open mesotrophic fen mire, other nests were located in small islands (3-5 ha) of flooded forest. The distance between neighboring nests was 2.2 - 8.0 km (mean 3.8 km). Two tree species, pine and alder, were used as nest trees, the nest height above the ground was 6-12 m (mean 9.2 m).

Spotted eagles at Olmany appeared to avoid oligotrophic bogs and to prefer highly waterlogged reed-sedge fen and transitory mires covered with sparse low birch stands and scattered small alder or mixed forest islands. The total area of habitat suitable for spotted eagles is ca. 100 km<sup>2</sup> in this plot. Thus, the GSE breeding density was 4.0 pair/100 km<sup>2</sup> of total plot area and 6.0 pair/100 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable breeding habitat (locally up to 1,1/ pair/10 km<sup>2</sup>). The ratio of GSE to LSE numbers at this plot was 6 : 1. Although some Olmany GSE adults were quite similar to LSE in plumage coloration, all large nestlings observed were reliably identified as GSE using a set of plumage characters and body part measurements. Mean brood size was 1,0 and mean breeding success was 0,7 young/active nest (n=5 and 7 respectively).

Using the density figures obtained, we estimated the total number of breeding GSE for the entire Olmany Mire tract as 10-15 pairs. Taking into consideration the probability of the GSE breeding in floodplain forests surrounding the mire tract, the actual local breeding population could be substantially larger.

Thus, a large breeding population of GSE has been discovered in Pripyat Paliessie. Our results revealed that published data on the Belarusian GSE population size represent a serious underestimate, mainly due to inadequate coverage and survey effort in the Paliessie region as well as difficulties in GSE and LSE field identification.

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