

Protection of Wintering Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Ukraine

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Among birds of prey the Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* has always been the subject of close study by Ukrainian ornithologists (Strautman 1963; Zubarovsky 1977; Gorban 1985; Grischenkov, Boreyko & Michalevich 1991) thanks to which, along with *Aquila chrysaetos*, *A. heliaca*, *Aegypius monachus*, *Gyps fulvus* and *Neophron percnopterus*, it was listed in the first edition of the Ukrainian Red Book, published in 1976. It will again be included in the 2nd edition, due for publication in 1992. Ukraine has 12 nature reserves, but in a number of them the Sea Eagle neither breeds nor winters. The species most regularly winters in such reserves as "Roztochya" in Lviv region (established 1980), the "Black Sea Reserve" in Mykolaiv region (established 1993) and in the "Lowlands of the Danube" reserve in Odessa region (established 1981). In the nine other reserves it does not occur, or only rarely. Nevertheless it is protected throughout the country.

Ukraine lies within the breeding range of the Sea Eagle. During the last century its numbers were greatly reduced, especially through killing by hunters, the destruction of old forests and the development of areas for recreation and tourism. However, the number of wintering birds is increasing. One reason for this is the appearance of new, suitable wintering grounds, for example near large reservoirs, often with warm water. A major wintering centre is near the Dnipro river, in central Ukraine.

The wintering of Sea Eagles in Ukraine has been known for more than 150 years (Zubarovsky 1977). Traditionally the birds stayed mainly in the south of the country, on the coasts of the Azov and Black Seas, and also in the deltas of the Dnipro, Dniester and Danube rivers. To-day the number of such sites is increasing. In northern and western Ukraine most wintering territories are isolated. The greatest concentrations are recorded on the Black Sea (Ardamackaja 1983), with from 50-80 birds. After landscape changes in central Ukraine some 30-40 eagles now winter there. In western Ukraine they are more pairs with young birds, generally some 20-25 birds in all. The total number of wintering Sea Eagles during 1980-1990 was nearly 200.

The current situation of wintering Sea Eagles in Ukraine was assessed during the scientific and educational "Year of the Eagle". Among the various regions the numbers recorded in 1989 were: Voeys region, 10; Dnipropetrovsk, 5; Kiev, 18; Crimea, 3; Lugansk, 2; Odessa, 27; Poltava, 2; Cherkasy, 10; and Chernigiv, 8, but these data are incomplete. We know that in Mykolaiv and Harkiv regions there are also birds

wintering.

Since 1956 in the Black Sea Eagle Reserve there have been 45-50 birds wintering every year.

To-day the Sea Eagle is strongly protected, not only in the reserves but also on its wintering grounds. Every effort must continue to be made to preserve this rare raptor.

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