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A CONTRIBUTION TO THE MIGRATION OF THE WHITE
STORK (*CICONIA CICONIA* (L.)) ALONG THE BULGARIAN
BLACK SEA COAST

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Data on the White Stork migration in the region between the Burgas lakes and the Bulgarian-Turkish border are presented. Spring passages from the beginning of March till the mid-May were observed. Flocks up to 250, most probably not breeding, birds were detected till the middle of June. A considerable bird flow passed over the town of Malko Tarnovo during the autumn.

Key words: White Stork, migration, Strandja mountain, Western Black Sea Route.

The White Stork is the most numerous soaring migrant on the West Black Sea passage (Мичев, 1984). The research on its migration in Bulgaria enables us to follow the changes in its numbers in the eastern part of Europe, to outline the basic migration routes and the sites where the birds rest and stay overnight. This information is used to work out programs for the preservation of the White Stork and for the needs of the aviation.

The main peculiarities of the autumn migration of this species in Bulgaria: numbers, period, routes of the flocks, etc., are noted by Мичев, Симеонов (1981), Мичев (1984) and Мичев и др. (1987). The information has been gathered by visual-radar methods. South of the Burgas Lakes only few visual observations have

been carried out and the slowly soaring flocks were usually near the radar station at the Ropotamo river. The data on the spring migration of the White Stork in the region are far more scarce (Простов, 1964; Roberts, 1979, etc.).

The purpose of this research is to complement the data about the autumn routes of the White Stork, the period of its spring routes and to follow to what extent the spring and the autumn routes in the region of the Burgas Lakes and the Bulgarian-Turkish border coincide.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research on the spring migration of the White Stork was carried out by weekly touring in the region of the three Burgas lakes (Atanassovo Lake, Vaia and Mandra) during March-June 1987 period (21 days). During these field researches the Bulgarian part of Strandja Mountain was toured too (1988-1992 — 232 days). The information about the autumn migration of the White Stork was gathered mainly by stationary observations: the town of Malko Tarnovo (17-25.08; 27-29.08; 01-05.09; 10,11.09.1988; 10-13.08.1989 — totally 23 days), the locality of Kovatch (03,06.09.1988; 09,27.08.1989 — 4 days totally), the locality of Katchul (23,30,31.08; 03,12-14.09.1988 — 7 days totally), the locality of the Thracian camp (07-09.09.1988; 21-24.08.1989 — 7 days totally) and the dam of Malko Sharkovo (15-18.08; 28,29.08.1989 — 6 days totally). The first four sites were attended because in this region the route divides into two to beset the highest hill of the Strandja Mountain — the Mount Machiada (1031 m). The radar observations of Мичев (1984) show no concentration of flocks at these localities. We ascertained a spring migration of the White Stork at the dam of Malko Sharkovo and that is why we chose it to be one of our observation points during the autumn migration in 1989.

The method we used is fully described by Мичев, Симеонов (1989), Мичев (1984) that is why we shall not dwell on it in this paper. We used it during five autumn migration periods at the Atanassovo Lake and cape Emine. During the observations we used binoculars 8 x 40 and 8 x 30 and an optical monocular x 20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spring passage. During the observations we ascertained 41 flocks in flight and 18 flocks landed for sleeping, resting or feeding due to adverse migration weather (Fig. 1). Table 1 shows the summarized data on the flocks divided into three groups according to the information about the periods of migration known so far. Простов (1964), Roberts (1979), Дончев (1980) report a migration period from March to mid-April. Thiollay (1968) and Roberts (1979) report a second spring passage till mid-May, which was supposed by Симеонов и др. (1990) to be a separate phenomenon. Our observations actually proved the duration of the spring passage from March till mid-May.

In the regions with lower altitude Симеонов и др. (1990) report wandering flocks numbering to about 100 and even more birds. The flocks observed in

