

Project Update: August 2016

The results of the final stage of the research of the Greater Spotted Eagle in the North-West of Ukraine

In the second and third weeks of July 2016, our team has monitored greater spotted eagle nesting results on the territory of Rivne and Volyn regions. As in previous years, we ringed chicks with metal and plastic rings, detected cases of hybridization of greater spotted eagle with lesser spotted eagle, looked at factors that affect breeding success, as well as studied spectrum of eagles' feeding. Large parts of Rivne region, home to the greater spotted eagle, were covered by massive wild fires in August and September 2015. Some bird nesting territories were affected by fire and were modified. But, despite this, only one of all the tested breeding platforms was not occupied, probably that was the reason.

Presumably, on the destroyed territories birds will change their nesting points within the breeding areas in the future. For the second year some areas of the marshes in summer were slightly flooded and many of them were without water at all. It is possible that as a result, the number of wetland birds that serve as feeding base for greater spotted eagle was smaller than in normal years. In total, on the territory of Rivne region (southern and northern branches, the swamp "Syraya Pogonya") eight nests were checked (one of them is new, found in winter). Three of them were occupied. There are two possibilities why it happened: or birds moved to other areas, or nesting was not successful. Four greater spotted eagle chicks and one chick from the known since 2012 hybrid pair were ringed. In Volyn region all known nests and territories of the greater spotted eagle are located on the valley of the river Pripjat. It is good to mention that in two nests, where in 2015 we ringed hybrid birds, all of the chicks were greater spotted eagle this year. As a result of this expedition six chicks of greater spotted eagle and one hybrid chick were ringed. Birds diet was identified: grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), great white egret (*Egretta alba*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), hazel grouse (*Tetrastes bonasia*), magpie (*Pica pica*), small passerine birds (*Passerinum* spp.), water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) and European mole (*Talpa europaea*). More information about nutrition of greater spotted eagle in Ukraine we get after study of pellets.

Also in the beginning of June proposed nesting places of greater spotted eagle in Lviv region on the border with Poland were investigated. Our Polish colleagues have observed greater spotted eagle many times there during nesting period in 2014. Presence of the eagle on the Ukrainian territory was not revealed. Among other species of birds of prey, we observed: common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), marsh harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*) and Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*), short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), feathers of Eurasian eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*) at known nesting biotope.

Pictures could be found on the website of Ukrainian Center for Birds of Prey Research: Sergey Domashevsky (Ukrainian Center for Birds of Prey Research), Mikhail Franchuk (Rivne Nature Reserve), Nikolai Skirpan (Franko Lviv National University).

Materials and results of the work can be viewed on the website of the Ukrainian Birds of Prey Research Center: <http://raptors.org.ua/ru/889>



Nestling Greater Spotted Eagle.



Hybrid chick Greater Spotted Eagle X Lesser Spotted Eagle.



Climbing the Great Spotted Eagle's Nest.



Chik of Greater Spotted Eagle.



Chik of Greater Spotted Eagle on the nest.



Chik of Greater Spotted Eagle on the nest.