

Project Update: May 2006

Field work was started on 25 of March. Spring 2006 is very cold and late with abundant snowfalls during March and April. Despite of water level in rivers was low in early spring we almost failure with catching of mergansers with mist-nets due to often snowfalls (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Strong snowfall on 18 of April: black crow from the window.

One male Scaly-sided Merganser was caught during the period 27 March – 19 April. Observations over foraging behaviour were done in March-April, when pre-breeding feeding occurred in the clean water before ice-break (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Main prey of the Scaly-sided merganser in spring: freshwater lamp sucker.

Surveys for breeding pairs and breeding population structure were started on 21 of April (in the season with normal spring conditions we started on 13-15 of April). Surveys aren't completed yet. By the moment we surveyed Kievka, Krivaya, Avvakumovka and Margaritovka Rivers. We attempted to survey Pavlovka-River but failure due to late peak of ice-breaking and high water after numerous snowfalls (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Saving of the rubber boat after unlucky survey attempt: crew fall down from the boat and un-droved boat got under the bridge. Sergey Vartanyan, Valery Shokhrin and volunteer Pavel Anukhin are raising a boat from the strong current, which pull it under the bridge.

Among the brief results we can say that the number of Scaly-sided Merganser significantly increased on Kievka and Krivaya Rivers comparing to 2005 and it is stable on Margaritovka-River and decrease was reported on Avvakumovka-River. We will continue surveys on Pavlovka, Vasilkovka and Lazovka rivers in nearest days.

We repaired nest tubes (from 2001) and nest boxes (from 2003) on Margaritovka and Kievka Rivers. We plan to start artificial nest checking on 5-8 of May (late checking due to late season).