

Project Update: January 2021

May - October 2020

During the spring season, we conducted monitoring counts and searches of new great snipe leks in the Vitebsk, Gomel and Mogilev regions. The spring was cold and moderately wet. A restoration of the great snipe breeding habitats in the Sporovo Reserve was stopped because about 2,000 ha of the fen mires burned out in early spring. We carried out searches of great snipe leks in these habitats during May 2020. The lekking arena was found in the same place as before, and the number of males was higher than the previous season (about 10 birds). Also, monitoring counts were carried out on key leks in floodplains of the Berezina, Dnepr, Schara, Gaina, Drut, Drisvyata, Svisloch rivers and Dikoe fen. We found the disappearance of some leks due to changes in the hydrological regime. Stable numbers of males were observed in grazed meadows placed in natural river floodplains.

Detailed surveys were conducted in the Drut River floodplain (about 160 km) and 25 plots of the Berezina, Drisviata and Svisloch rivers. We found three new leks. We collected a lot of data on leks (more than 800 hours of observations) using camera traps. It was detected due to camera that goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) also chase great snipe during lekking at sunset. Our observations revealed the late lekking activities of males on July 8-9 2020 was connected with favourable breeding conditions and lack of disturbance in the better habitats.

Gathering data on a restoration of habitats in frameworks of other projects was performed in the southern and eastern parts of Belarus. We found that regulated grazing in floodplain meadows provides more favourable conditions for breeding great snipe than habitat management only using haymaking.



Monitoring research in breeding habitats after a fire in the Sporovo Reserve



Top: Installation of photo and video equipment in the lekking arena. Bottom: The early appearance of the male on lekking arena may lead to death due to predators as the goshawk.





Top: The late lekking activity of male in favourable breeding habitats. Bottom: Beaver dams help to maintain favourable breeding conditions for Great Snipes after spring floods.





Top: Ploughing up meadows near the lek is a threat for the species. Bottom: Regulated grazing in floodplain meadows of the Pripyat River.

