

Identifying of Lesser Spotted Eagles by wing markers in Latvia

Latvia is one of the main regions of the entire breeding area of the Lesser Spotted Eagle. Within a relatively small area (64.600 km² altogether) an important part of the complete world-population is breeding – ca. 3000-5000 pairs. Population ecological studies and monitoring of this species in our country were started in the 1980's.

In 2003 the Research Division of the Administration of Nature Reserve Teiči, by which the investigations of this species in Latvia are coordinated, started the marking of Lesser Spotted Eagles by coloured wing marks. Individual labelling of the birds is the only way to study breeding site fidelity of the adults, dispersion of the offspring, as well as live span. These informations serve as the most important scientific justification for the protection of the breeding ranges.

Marking is carried out in two study areas of the Lesser Spotted Eagle in eastern Latvia – in "Murmastiene" (460 km²; N56° 37.310', E26° 27.665') and in "Zuklis" (94 km²; N56° 52.973', E26 24.468), where in every year detailed information about ca. 45-50 breeding sites is documented. The preparation and fastening of the wing marks are supported methodically by Prof. Dr. Michael Stubbe and Dr. Annegret Stubbe from the Zoological Institute of the University of Halle (Germany) und by Duncan Orr-Ewing of the RSPB Scotland. Altogether, until now, 2 adults and 19 juvenile birds have been marked. At both wings wingmarks of identical colour and number get fastened, which can be read from the upper side of the wings. In the study area „Murmastiene” the adults get labelled with sky-blue wing marks with black number und juveniles with white marks with black number, in the study area „Zuklis” adults with yellow wing marks with black number and juveniles with red marks with white number. By help of good field glasses marked birds can be identified in a distance up to 0.5 km.

The research program started will be continued in the next years. Considering the remarkable life span of the Lesser Spotted Eagles, important results have to be expected in the breeding territories as well as in passage areas.

Please report about observations of Lesser Spotted Eagles with coloured wing marks at following address:

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