



EUROSITE

Spoonbill network



newsletter

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Editorial

By Otto Overdijk (NL) and Patrick Triplet (F)

At least, this is our electronic newsletter. You will find in it the texts Otto has sent to everybody a few weeks ago. It was a first step and it highlighted the necessity of a real newsletter that could be edited twice a year. We think that it is necessary to give information about Spoonbills after the winter, because there is a need to follow the increase wintering in Europe and to publish recent news about the African wintering. Another issue is

important after the breeding season, so that everybody knows the breeding success and contributes to the controls of birds.

Of course, if this first issue is devoted mainly to the European Spoonbill, we expect to have new about the African one in the next issues. We really hope that you'll enjoy this newsletter and contribute to its edition.

Breeding season 2003 in The Netherlands

By Otto Overdijk (NL)

The weather circumstance in Holland for up-growing juvenile Spoonbills was excellent in 2003. No heavy spells of rain and relative good temperatures. The chicks were healthy and growing well, not many dead juveniles were found into the colonies. In contrast, during the breeding season of 2002 many juveniles were found dead due to the bad and cold weather.

At the colony of the Wadden Sea island of Schiermonnikoog (5331N-0611E) a re-production rate of 1.8 juveniles for each breeding pair was found. In contrast, in 2002 the re-production rate was 0.44 juveniles. The size of this colony was, in 2003, 170 breeding pairs, thus approximately 306 juveniles fledged. Last year, the size of this colony was bigger, 240 breeding pairs but re-produced 105 juveniles which is 200 juveniles less than this year. The same development was also found on other colonies in Holland. The size of the total Dutch breeding population decreased from 1 576 breeding pairs in 2002 to 1 300 this year.

In 2003 the number of breeding sites in Holland was 25.

Juvenile Spoonbills spend their period of immaturity in Western Africa mainly. After 3 or 4 years they are mature and return to their natal area for re-production. The lower number of returning (first time breeding) adults can be related to the re-production in 1999 or 2000.

Colour ringing effort in Holland in 2003

On seven different breeding sites were ringing activities. In total 200 juveniles are ringed. This number of newly ringed birds is enough to keep the percentage of colour ringed birds into the population between 10 and 15 %. This percentage of colour ringed birds into a population can be considered as high enough for statistical scientific research like estimation of survival rates.

Recoveries in 2003

During the breeding period many readings are made close by or into the colonies. Up to the moment of writing this article (June 2003), 416 recoveries are made.

Most readings are made on the post breeding staging sites. During August and September both,

adults and juveniles are gathered onto those post breeding staging sites in very large flocks (up to 6-800 individuals) and it is easy to read many rings there. Normally around 1 000 recoveries are made on these sites every year.

Ringling in the Danube Delta Romania

by Atilla D. Sandor (Ro)

The delta of the Danube river in Romania is covered by huge reedbeds and lakes. In this area a large Spoonbill colony (approx. 330 breeding pairs in 2003) is established. On 15th June-2003 the BirdLife Romania partner visited this colony in order to colour ring a random sample of nestlings. Fifty nestlings were ringed with colour rings received from the Working group for Spoonbills International (NL). The rings are in colour Red (left leg) and Black (right leg) both with an equal inscription, 90 degrees rotated and two times

repeated on each ring. The rings were put on the tibia and below the black ring, a metal ring from the Centrala Ornitol Romania was put on. This metal ring has an unique number inscription.

The ringling took place at the Prundul colony Pasari, Sinoie Lake, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. Recoveries of these birds can be send to the Centrala Ornitol Romania (mailto: office@sor.ro) or to the Workinggroup for Spoonbills (mailto: o.overdijk@natuurmonumenten.nl)

The Spoonbill situation in Serbia in 2003

by Marko Tucakov and Antun Zuljevic (Yo)

1. **Carska bara** (UTM: DR51) is huge complex of alluvial wetlands, forests, ponds, marshes, reedbeds and artificial carp fishpond that is situated near town Zrenjanin, at the mouth of The Begej and The Tisha rivers (western Banat region, Vojvodina province, Serbia). It is Ramsar site since 1996, and a part of the area is forming Special nature reserve "Stari Begej - Carska bara". The site holds very significant concentrations of breeding herons. In the recent times, there are heronries on several localities: Mala Carska bara, Botoski rit, Perleska bara, Ecka fishponds. In the 1998, during the last census, colony of Spoonbills was in Perleska bara marsh. The number of breeding pairs on the whole locality in 1998:

Phalacrocorax carbo : 100-110;

Nycticorax nycticorax : 140-140;

Ardeola ralloides : 12-14 ;

Egretta garzetta : 5;

Egretta alba : 45-50 ;

Ardea cinerea : 50-50;

Ardea purpurea : 35-40,

Platalea leucorodia : 20-21.

The place is very traditional breeding site for Spoonbills.

2. **Okanj** is depression situated near the left bank of the Tisa river (UTM: DR43), and representing fossil meander of the river itself. It is situated near village Elemir (Zrenjanin commune, western Banat,

Vojvodina province, Serbia). The whole depression is 200 ha large, and contains brackish water. In some parts edges are covered by reed, and there are also extreme saline edges, with short halophytic vegetation. The place is traditional for breeding herons. A mixed colony with Spoonbill was formed in 1998. In this year it included 47 pairs of *Egretta alba*, 33 pairs of *Ardea cinerea*, 27 pairs of *Ardea purpurea* and 59-60 pairs of *Platalea leucorodia*. The place is not protected!!!

3. **Becej** fishpond. It was flooded in 1969 on the pastureland near Becej town, the lower Tisa river basin. Coordinates: Becej town is in UTM DR 25 square (45.37. N, 20.02. E), and Becej fishpond, situated near the town (eastern Backa area, Vojvodina province, Serbia) is in UTM DR24 square (45.33. N, 20.02. E) Habitat and breeding niche: reedbed on one of the ponds

History of the colony: mixed colony in the fishpond is old, and Spoonbills are breeders since 1990 (1 pair). In 1992, 45 pairs bred, after the forming of artificial platform in the middle of the colony. Number of pairs: estimate in 2003 is done just for Spoonbills. Other data are from 1998, when our last official census of all colonies was done. Our presumption is that number of breeding pairs of all species is very similar in this year, but you should

anyway note that we done precise estimate just for Spoonbills!

Platalea leucorodia : 50-70 pairs ;

Nycticorax nycticorax : 330-360 pairs ;

Ardeola ralloides : 110-140 pairs;

Egretta garzetta : 85-105 pairs;

Ardea cinerea : 50-60 pairs ;

Ardea purpurea : 180-200 pairs;

Egretta alba : (new breeder in the colony, estimate for 2003) 1-2 pairs.

Other information: On May 31, 2003, when we ringed the birds, about 70 chicks were already completely feathered (one capable for flying). All of them were outside of the nests on one place. We also found about 10 nests with eggs and 5 with very young chicks.

In Serbia the nestlings are coloured ringed with on both legs (tibia) white coloured rings with on both rings the same inscription, 90 degrees rotated and two times repeated one each ring.

Below the coloured ring on its right leg, a metal ring of the bird ringing centre with an unique number engraved. Recoveries can be sent to local bird ringing centre or to the Working group for Spoonbills.

4. **Jazovo** fishpond (UTM: DR 38) is 400 ha large carp fishpond situated at the river Tisa, near Jazovo village (Kikinda commune, northern Banat region, province Vojvodina, Serbia). Fishpond is formed in 1972. Spoonbill is irregular breeder on it: at the 1980s there were 40 breeding pairs, in 2002, 6 pairs, and in 2003, 4 pairs. Census carried out in 1998 has showed the presence of the mixed colony, but without Spoonbills. In that years situation was as follow :

Nycticorax nycticorax : 60-70 pairs ;

Egretta garzetta : 2-5 pairs ;

Ardea cinerea : 15-20 pairs ;

Ardea purpurea : 30-40 pairs ;

Plegadis falcinellus : 4 pairs (breeder just in that year!).

Spoonbill becomes regular breeder in recent years. Unfortunately, very valuable complex of fishpond together with surrounding saline meadows and temporary shallow saline lakes is not protected! It is inside the IBA area Jazovo-Mokrin, and on the very

eastern edge of Special nature reserve "Great Bustard meadows". The colony itself is every year endangered by rising a water level in the fishpond during the breeding season (in this year all Spoonbill nests are destroyed!), or even by burning off dry reed in the start of the breeding season.

5. **Obedska bara** : It is our oldest protected area, since the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It is large floodplain area (UTM: DQ 25) of the Sava river (between Kupinovo and Obrez settlements, pecinci commune, southern Srem area, Vojvodina province, Serbia) with large surfaces of forests (some communities are primeval), eutrophic ponds, swamps, reedbeds and water bodies. The largest water body is former meander of the river, that is now totally overgrown by dense emergent vegetation. Since 1977 it is a Ramsar site, and since 1989 an IBA area.

The large breeding colony of herons was enriched with Spoonbill in 2002 (1-2 pairs). Situation is expecting to be improved due to large-scale reconstruction activities. At the present time, 100 hectares of a large surface of wet meadows is restaurated, and that will contribute to presence of Spoonbills. It is the only place where Spoonbills were breeding on the bushes (willows): on other ones they breed in Phragmites-Typha stands.

6. **Southeastern Montenegro**: During this year, a colony of 20 Spoonbills was formed on the lake between Skadar lake and Ulcinj town (Saveljic, pers.com.). It is a new breeding site, but further information remained scarce.

Total number of breeding pairs of Spoonbill in Serbia (1998) : 130-141

Total number of breeding localities in 1998 : 3

Total number of breeding pairs in Serbia in 2003:135-157

Total number of breeding localities in Serbia and Montenegro in 2003: 155-177

Total number of breeding localities in Serbia in 2003:4-5

Total number of breeding localities in Serbia and Montenegro in 2003: 5-6

Spoonbills Spring numbers in the Senegal Delta

By Idrissa Ndiaye (S), Issa Sidibé (S) , Patrick Triplet (F)

The Senegal delta welcomes the two palearctic species of Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia* and *P. alba*). The former uses St Louis lagunas (including Gueumbeul Nature Reserve), the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj (Senegal) and the Parc National du Diawling (Mauritania) while the latter is almost exclusively found in the National Parks. More than

2.5 thousand European Spoonbills spend winter in the Delta, for some hundred of African Spoonbills. From the autumn flood, ponds are drying up progressively and, in March, water is only available in some places. Birds survey are regular during the winter months, but not between March and September. So, knowledge is restricted about some

species such as the two Spoonbills. During three months (March to May), in 2002, one of us (I.N.) spent time to count the two species in the Djoudj National Parc. The two other authors controlled the Guembeul Nature Reserve in May and in July.

No birds were seen outside the Djoudj National Park (no data on the Mauritanian Site). In the Park, number is increasing for the two species during the three months, probably in relation to the drying of surrounding ponds. Number of European Spoonbills (all immatures) reaches one thousand birds in May. Ponds inside the Park dry up too during this period and in July, just before the flood, levels are very low. During this month, we counted only 190 European Spoonbills and less than 20 African Spoonbills. At the present time we have no idea of the mitigated place.

At least, it seems necessary to continue and to improve census all around the year, with a particular attention from March to July, in relation to water levels in all the ponds of the delta, including the Mauritanian side of the Senegal River. So, we probably best understand how birds spend their first years of life which probably determine their migratory and breeding ability

when they become adults. We probably learn what are the potential dangers for birds and it will help to enhance protection.

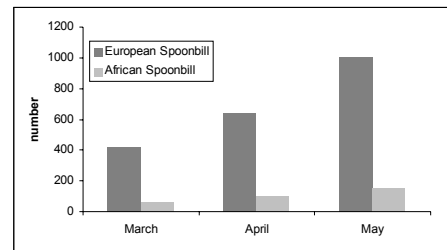


Fig. 1 : Number of each species during the three months period

Many thanks to Otto Overdijk for helpful comments.

Triplet P., Yésou P. (1999) La Spatule blanche *Platalea leucorodia* hivernant dans le delta du Fleuve Sénégal. *Malimbus* 21 : 77-81.

Spoonbills in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany Klaus Günther, Schutzstation Wattenmeer

Short status report 2004

Spoonbills had been scarce visitors to the Wadden Sea and inland wetlands of Schleswig-Holstein up to the 1990s. Since then the number of Spoonbills increased and in recent years up to 80 birds have been recorded in late summer in Hauke-Haien-Koog, a wetland behind the sea-dike.

The first breeding pair was observed in 1999 in the salt marshes of Hallig Oland, a small, scarcely inhabited island in the North Frisian Wadden Sea close to Hauke-Haien-Koog. In the following years the number of breeding pairs increased with 2 pairs in 2001, 6 pairs in 2002 and 8-10 pairs in 2003. A second colony with 6 pairs was established in 2002 on the uninhabited island of Trischen, a protected

area in the southern part of the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea.

Breeding success was moderate on Trischen with 9 juveniles in 2002 and 7 in 2003. There is no record of breeding success on Oland in the first years. In 2003 high tides destroyed all nests in an early stage, but seven birds grew up in replacement clutches. They fledged as late as in the middle of July, four weeks later than those on Trischen. Until now 18 juveniles were colour-ringed in Schleswig-Holstein, 16 birds on Trischen and 2 on Oland.

The development of the Spoonbill breeding-population will be observed with high interest. Although both colonies are located safely on islands, the colony on Oland has a higher risk of being flooded by high tides.

European Spoonbill : high number in the Senegal delta in January 2004

Patrick Triplet, Maurice Benmergui, Vincent Schricke, Gilles Leray

Every winter since 1989, our team have counted waterbirds in the Senegal delta with a financial help of ONCFS, OMPO and of UE between 1998 and 2002. If our program is most oriented towards ducks, we pay great attention to different species and in particular to the European Spoonbill. A first paper (Triplet and Yésou, 1999) gave some information about the numbers and the distribution

of this species on each side of the Senegal river (Senegal and Mauritania). Until now, 1999 was the year with the highest number (2852 birds) of present Spoonbills in the delta area. In January 2004, the total number of the present individuals was 5058. The results of the count are given in table 1. This very high number is approximately 50 % of the whole NW European breeding population.

Is this count reliable ? All the birds in Mauritania were counted the 15th. It is necessary to look at the temporal distribution on the Senegalese side of the delta. Most of the birds (2230) were counted the 17th in the Gueumbeul reserve (the most important brackish water lake close to St Louis) where only 1100 birds were present the day before. It is strange to note that the 1120 lacking birds correspond to the 1115 birds found in the Diawling National Park two days before. But how can we declare that all birds, gathered in three groups in the NP Diawling the day before the count, came together in one flock at the Senegalese side of the delta (distance approx. 22 km). Is it or not a local movement ? Number of wintering birds in the South of the Senegal delta is very low (Dodman & Diagana, 2003) so there is no way to suppose that birds were on a stopover. Thus, observations realised by Y. Diawara (PNBA, pers. com.) on December, 25th, show that a similar number of Spoonbills were still there, between Aftout Es Sahéli and Diawling : 2290 - 1640 on the Chott, and 650 on the Park. So if we accept a mass movement where all the present birds came together in one flock and we double counted the former 1100 present birds, we still have a remarkable record of 3938 birds in the area.

Of course, there is no matching in the dates and places between these data, and there is no way to actually know how the spoonbills were spread, at the nearest of the mid-winter counts. But, even if continual and rapid birds moving remain possible, for instance, between Guembeul and NDP, accent must be put on methodological approaches. Especially, in a way to obtain technical and financial supports of counting the whole area so to eliminate doubts about such astonishing birds populations numbers.

The 16th and 17th, in the evening, birds roosted closed to the edge of the Gueumbeul lake. So it was relatively easy to read the coloured rings. At this time, we are sure of 42 birds from the Netherlands (O. Overdijk, pers. comm.), 19 from France (L. Marion pers. comm.) and 163 from Spain (C. Campoamor, pers. comm.). All the results will be presented during the next workshop.

Dodman T., Diagana C.H. (2003) African Waterbird Census 1999, 2000 & 2001. Wetlands International, Global Series 16, 368 p.
 Triplet P., Yésou P. (1999) La Spatule blanche *Platalea leucorodia* hivernant dans le delta du Fleuve Sénégal. *Malimbus* 21 : 77-81.

Table 1 : Eurasian Spoonbill distribution during the 2004 IWC

Sites	St Louis salt water lakes	Djoudj National Park (S)	Other Senegalese sites	Diawling National Park (RIM)	Chatt Boul, Aftout es Saheli (RIM)
numbers	2395	103	122	1115	1323

The Eurosite Spoonbill network newsletter is edited by Eurosite. The present editorial team is composed by Otto Overdijk (Natuurmonumentum) and by Patrick Triplet (SMACOPI).

