



EUROSITE

Spoonbill network



newsletter

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Editorial

François LETOURNEUX
Eurosité President

The Spoonbill is one of the rarest bird species in Europe, cited in Annex I of the Bird Directive. For staging in migration, and even more for breeding, it needs wetlands of very high quality. For managers of protected areas, it is then at the same time a symbol, a hope and sometimes a reward for their work.

At the heart of Eurosité, these managers find possibilities for exchanging ideas, with the objective of improving their knowledge and enhancing the best methods of managing species and their habitats. The most committed of these have wished to create a Spoonbill network. During

the last of the three workshops organized with this aim, it was decided to create a newsletter which could be widely distributed among members of the network and also beyond it. This newsletter would like in fact to collect and to place all Spoonbill news from Europe and Africa at everybody's disposal.

The Spoonbill network is very important for Eurosité. It gives a good example of contribution to the enhancement of the Natura 2000 program. I wish this newsletter a long and exciting life and I hope all of you will see more and more Spoonbills in sites which are managed better and better.

Activity rhythm and feeding behaviour of the European Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) during the Spring migration in the Seine Estuary

David HEMERY et Christophe AULERT,
Maison de l'Estuaire, Observatoire de l'avifaune de la ZPS Estuaire et marais de la Basse Seine

During the Spring migration, the three main stop over sites of Spoonbills in France are the Nature reserves of Teich (Bassin d'Arcachon), Falguérec (Golfe du Morbihan) and of the Seine estuary. In this site, Spoonbills are mostly counted between the end of February and the end of May. The Seine Estuary is the last important stop over site before the birds fly towards their Dutch breeding colonies. Numbers, compared to the global population, indicate that the site is of international importance for the species.

During this period, Spoonbills exploit mainly hunting ponds. According to LEGAGNEUX (2001), parameters explaining the use of some ponds are the presence of Crustaceans and Fishes :

the Shrimp *Palaemonetes varians*, Three-spined Stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* and Ten-spined Stickleback *Pungitius pungitius*.

Birds localisation

During the 2003 Spring migration, we have noted that 60 % of European Spoonbill occupied only 13 ponds. Two of them were sampled for prey abundance. These ponds are all situated upper the Pont de Normandie and in the South of the Grand Canal du Havre. Spoonbills were often on ponds in the South of the estuary road, in reedbeds, instead of in meadows where they were concentrated the years before.

Activity rhythm

A first resting phase occurs at the beginning of the day (fig. 2). It is probably the end of a longer phase (not observed) at the end of the night. Then, birds feed during two hours after sunrise, followed by a new resting phase until the 6th hour after sunrise. Then, the proportion of feeding birds increases progressively. Feeding rhythm is more important at the end of the day. Some birds feed at sunset.

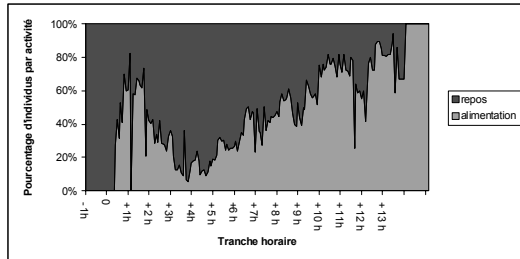


Figure 2 : Spoonbill Diurnal Activity Rhythm during pre breeding migration in the Seine Estuary in 2003

Fishing techniques

Picking is the most frequent feeding behaviour. This behaviour is noted in 76% of the observed birds, in relation with available biomass in ponds (Three-spined Stickleback and Ten-spined Stickleback contribute to 80,2% of the ingested biomass). Picking and sweeping represent 15% when sweeping alone is noted in 9% of the birds.

Feeding efficiency

Mean Capture Rate is 3,34 prey/min with a maximum rate of 11,8 prey/minute. There is no difference either between feeding rates of adults and juveniles, nor

between the feeding techniques used according to age classes.

Capture rates increase during migration period. They are low in March, of about 2 prey/minute and increase in April and May, with values around 5 captures/minute.

Capture rate does not vary with site depth. However, Spoonbills feed mostly in 15-30 cm depth ponds. Capture rates decrease significantly with size group numbers.

Feeding sites

Spoonbill use ponds with some characteristics about salinity and percentage of vegetation. Salinity is probably associated with high number of prey species. Water management is then an important element to consider in a site for Spoonbills.

Activity Rhythm is similar to those observed in Charente Maritime, although less high (BOILEAU, 2001) : high value for feeding at the beginning of the day, resting around noon and new high value at the end of the day and at sunset. Capture rates in Seine Estuary are equivalent to those in Moëze Oléron (BOILEAU, 2001). However, there are differences in feeding strategies between the two sites. Picking is the most used one in the Estuary. In this site, Spoonbills feed upon fishes while schrimps are the main prey in Moëze-Oléron.

References

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Spoonbills in Spain in 2004

Claudine de le Court

Plan régional de conservation de la Spatule, Consejería de Medio Ambiente, Junta de Andalucía

The breeding season 2004 was very good for Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia* in Andalusia. There were a total of 10 spoonbill colonies distributed over three provinces of Huelva, Sevilla and Cádiz, most of them in protected areas. Only 3.5% of nests were located in private land. The total number of breeding pairs was 1800, similar to 2003 nesting population (1 726 breeding pairs). Most of nests (97%) were concentrated in five colonies, Doñana (65%), Odiel marshes (11%), Ayamonte (9%), Casaneves (6%) and Bahía de Cádiz (6%). It is important to note that the nesting population in

Andalucía, that seems quite stable in the last three years, represents 50-60% of the Western Europe population, with 38% of the effectives are still concentrated in one single colony (Doñana).

A total of 718 chicks were ringed at nest in five colonies. Among them, 96 (13%) were found dead. In colonies where it can be accurately estimated, the breeding success (estimated as the number of fledged chicks by pairs who attempted to breed) was high compared to other years, with values between 1.20 and 1.45 chick per pair.

The reasons of the success are 1) The favourable climatology (a rainy autumn-winter), which benefit to all colonies especially Doñana and 2) the absence of very high spring tides, which usually cause important losses in Odiel marshes by flooding nests where birds breed on the ground.

A coordinated national count was carried out in mid-July, at the time when most spoonbills congregate before starting the post-breeding migration towards Africa. Nearly 6 000 spoonbills

were counted, most of them (91%) in the Guadalquivir marshes.

In Doñana, an important mortality of spoonbills was registered this summer associated with hot temperature days. A total of 249 birds were collected, dead or injured. Among them, 47% were adults. In such a long-lived species, changes in the adult mortality may significantly affect the population dynamics, while the effects may not be noticed before several years. Mortality causes are currently under research.

Spoonbill breeding population in Holland in 2004

Otto Overdijk
Natuurmonumenten

Spoonbills spent their non-breeding period in Western Africa and every spring they migrate to Holland for reproduction. In surrounding countries there are not many breeding pairs and Holland welcomes around 95% of all the West European Spoonbill population.

Every spring, the question is how many pairs will arrive for breeding? The breeding population of Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*) recovered after the decrease of 20% last year. This year the breeding of 1500 breeding pairs was found, like in 2002, while in 2003 only 1200 B.P. were recorded.

The reason of the lower number of breeding pairs in 2003 must probably be found in other countries, for instance the drought in the South Spanish marshes. Spoonbills stop-over during their migration of 4500 km for resting and feeding. If they cannot recover at

the stop-over-site they are not able to migrate further and stay or return. This probably happened in 2003.

In the past, Spoonbills bred in many parts of "lower Holland" and were forced by human to occupy intensively small refuges of nature. The Wadden Sea area is an important breeding area now, it welcomes around 70% of all Spoonbills. In the past most Spoonbills bred on the mainland of Holland.

Spoonbills on the Wadden Sea island nest on the ground, in wet dunes and on saltmarshes as well. Birds breeding on salt marshes are threatened by high floods. This year, in June, the salt marshes of Balgzand, Texel, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog were flooded and around 120 nests were lost.

Spoonbill breeding-season 2004 in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

Klaus Guenther

Rastvogel-Monitoring im Nationalpark, Schleswig-Holsteinisches Wattenmeer

The breeding season 2004 was quite successful in Schleswig-Holstein. The total number of breeding pairs remained stable with at least 16 pairs in two colonies (9 pairs on Trischen and 7 pairs on Hallig Oland). The colonies were not flooded during the breeding period and the young hatched earlier than in the former years. Breeding success was much better and in total 29 Spoonbills grew up (14 on Trischen and 15 on Hallig Oland). 26 of them have been colour-ringed at the end of May/early June (2 in mid July on Trischen from a late brood). The food for the chicks was *Crangon crangon* exclusively (at the time of ringing).

Bad weather (cold, wet and windy) during June and July with very high tides in the Wadden Sea may have caused losses among the chicks. But at least on Trischen most if all young survived and fledged since many of them have been observed at the mainland coast in late July!

The number of non breeding birds was very low this spring and very few birds have been observed outside the breeding colonies on the coastline. After the breeding period two sites in SH were used by larger numbers of Spoonbills for staging and resting: Hauke-Haien-Koog in Northfriesland and

Meldorfer Koog in Dithmarschen (ca. 50 and 30

individuals respectively at the end of July).

Spoonbills in the Nature Reserve of Baie de Somme (Ornithological Park of Marquenterre) France in 2004

Philippe Carruette

SMACOPI

Six birds wintered while the first migrating birds arrived the 8th February. The first breeders arrived in the Heron colony the 9th March, an early date in relation with the maturity of the pairs. The first two

nests are built the 16th March and copulations are noted the 18th March. 22 breeding pairs produce 34 young birds.

Colourringing in 2004

Otto Overdijk

This breeding season, 666 different individuals (nestlings) are colourringed in 8 different countries, 146 individuals in Serbia & Montenegro, 8 in Czech-Republic, 62 in Croatia, 26 in Romania, 107 in Hungary, 390 in The Netherlands and 26 in Germany.

The used colour combinations are White/White, Blue/Orange, Black/Red, Lightgreen/Lightgreen and one Red/Red (thanks to Leon Kelder, NL) and

also one Orange/Orange (thanks to Maarten Stoepker NL)

Re-sightings of the ringed birds can be send to the Workinggroup for Spoonbills, mailto o.overdijk@natuurmonumenten.nl or to your local birdringingcentre.

Extra-ordinary recoveries

Otto Overdijk

On 26th of September 2004 an ornithologist from Belgium was birding in Israel. In a group of 150 Spoonbills he found three colourringed Spoonbills feeding in a fishpond, all immatures. One bird was originating from Serbia (125 days and 1972 km distance), one bird was originating from Hungary (134 days and 2044 km.) and the last bird (second year) originating from Romania 451 days and 1477 km. distance).

In December 2003 a colourringed juvenile Spoonbill was found in the Emirate of Oman. This

bird was ringed as nestling on 3th of July 2003 in the Danube Delta, 178 days before the finding in Oman and 3814 km. distance of its natal colony in Romania.

On the 3th of October 2004 a juvenile ringed Spoonbill was found on Cabo Verde, island Boa Vista. The bird was exhausted and unfortunately died the next day. It was ringed as a nestling, 128 days before its finding on Cabo Verde which is 4781 km distance from its natal colony in The Netherlands.

Publications on Spoonbills

We would like to publish once a year a list of publications dealing with Spoonbills. So please could you send a copy of your articles and notes to

Patrick Triplet (Maison Ramsar, 80 132 Port-le-Grand, France). Present and past papers are all welcome.

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