

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* breeding in Western Ukraine

A.A. Bokotej

All attempts by Ukrainian ornithologists during this century to determine the status of these eagles and their distribution have resulted in controversy over the systematic distinction between Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles and their identification in the field.

The basic historical information on this subject in Western Ukraine derives from the collection of the State Natural History Museum in Lvov (DPM UAN), which includes 34 specimens of both Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles collected in Galicia from 1851-1895. Such wellknown ornithologists as V.V Djedjerin, F.I. Strautman and V.M. Zoubarovsky worked on these birds at various times, but unfortunately none of them could properly identify the two species..

All the above authors found difficulty in defining the parameters for identification of each species, i.e. overall length, length of wing, notches on seventh primary, colouring of mantle, etc. Whether the size and length of the bill was truly significant as a diagnostic parameter was always disputed and it proved impossible to identify five chicks in down or to distinguish the 24 clutches of eggs.

As a result, we have in the museum collection 14 specimens of Greater and 20 of Lesser Spotted Eagle, and as a basic criterion for their identification we have taken the length and depth of the bill (in our case there was not much difference in the overall size of the bills), and out of the five chicks, three appear to be Lesser Spotted with two Greater Spotted. Both were taken from nests in Lvov district in 1854, which confirms the fact that the Greater Spotted Eagle had nested in Western Ukraine. Such nesting in our region is also substantiated by the clutches of eggs also preserved in our museum.

A.A. Bokotej
State Museum of Natural History
Ornithology Dept
Teatralna St. 18