

Data on Nesting of White-tailed Sea Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Polessie (Byelorussia)

N.D. Cherkas

Contrary to Byelorussian Pozerje (the northern lake region) where the number and distribution of White-tailed Sea Eagles are well-known, data on the nesting of this species in Polessie are scanty. Although in that region there are fish farms, reservoirs, lakes and rivers adjacent to old forests, special censuses of the eagles in Polessie have not been conducted. Here I present a description of five nests found between 1979 and 1990.

In the nesting area of White-tailed Sea Eagles near Lake Vygonovskoe (Ivatsévichi district, Brest region) the birds changed nests five times during 1948 to 1989. The first known nest there was located on a large pine-tree in a sphagnum pine forest, 700m from the lake. The second was found near Oginsky Channel in the early 1980s. The third nest was observed near the River Shchara, not far from the lake. The fourth was found on the lake shore in 1989. All four nests were built on large branches of old alder-trees near the trunks. The eagles have been known to breed near the lake since the early 20th century (Dolbik & Dorofeev 1978).

The second known breeding area of White-tailed Sea Eagles is situated near Lake Chervonoe (Zhitkovichi district, Gomel region). The first record of breeding was in 1926 (Fedyushin 1928). In 1979 a nest was found in a swampy alder forest, 1.5km from the lake. It was situated on large branches of an old alder-tree, 23m above the ground. The birds bred there successfully until 1981, when drainage activities lowered the water level, making the nest accessible, and it was destroyed. However, the eagles continued to breed in the neighbourhood as they were regularly observed during the breeding seasons of 1985 and 1988.

There are two more nests in Zhitkovichi district. In 1980 White-tailed Sea Eagles bred in an old oak forest near Beloe Fish Farm. The nest was built on large branches of an oak-tree, 20m above the ground. Later, this nest was destroyed during clear-felling. The eagles were observed near that fish farm in August 1988 and again in May 1989.

A nest was observed near Krasnaya Gorka Fish Farm only in 1981. The eagles bred at the edge of a swampy forest; their nest was built on an old pine-tree, 20m above the ground.

One more White-tailed Eagle's nest was found in the Pripjat floodplain in Mozyr district, Gomel region. This nest was not controlled in the advanced stages of breeding in 1981 and has never been visited since then. Its fate is unknown.

White-tailed Sea Eagles are regularly observed in the breeding season in many places of Polessie. Such sightings have been made at fish farms Krasnaya Sloboda (Soligorsk district, Minsk region), Loktyshi (Gantsevichi district, Brest region), Selets (Bereza district, Brest region), Polessie (Pinsk district, Brest region) and Tremlya (Petrikov district, Gomel region), as well as at Lake Bobrovichskoe (Ivatsevichi district, Brest region). Nine birds, including five juveniles, were observed simultaneously at Loktyshi Fish Farm. The eagles have been regularly seen near large lakes and fish farms in winter since the 1920s.

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N.D. Cherkas
Institute of Zoology
Academy of Science
Dowamora 3/A
230015 Grodno
Byelorussia