

## The White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Lithuania

Eugenijus Drobelis

At the beginning of the 19th century the White-tailed Sea Eagle was a common bird in Lithuanian woodlands. Later this species vanished from the territory of Lithuania due to cutting of the forests as well as direct persecution. In the first half of the 20th century solitary individuals were recorded wintering or during migration. Since that time the numbers of wintering White-tailed Sea Eagles here progressively increased. Most frequently this species was observed at the seaside or at the Cepkeliai and Zuvintas Nature Reserves. Currently about 30-40 White-tailed Sea Eagles are wintering along the Kuršiu Marios.

Later, more and more single birds used to remain in Lithuania to breed. To attract this species, artificial nests started to be built. In one such nest at the Cepkeliai Nature Reserve eagles already tried to breed in 1985-86 but only in 1987 was the first juvenile successfully reared. In the same year two more juveniles were reared in one nest at the Kuršiu Marios. In 1988 these two nest sites were also occupied but no eaglets were observed. In the same year a third pair established itself near Kuršiu Marios and successfully bred. In 1989 White-tailed Sea Eagles were observed at their old nest sites but no young were reared. In 1990 even four pairs occupied territories on the coast, one pair adopting an artificial nest. Seven juveniles were reared in these four nests: 2, 2, 2, and 1. Two more eagle pairs were observed in the environs of the Cepkeliai Nature Reserve. In 1991 five eagle pairs tried to breed on the coast, but unsuccessfully, only one eaglet appearing in a newly-erected artificial nest at Cepkeliai.

Thus, during 1987-1991 in Lithuania we observed eight successful breedings of the White-tailed Sea Eagle, and 13 eaglets were reared. In separate years we observed the attempts of 2-7 pairs to breed, and the number is constantly increasing.

Rather stable groups of breeding White-tailed Sea Eagles have formed in West and South Lithuania (see figure), conditioned by the construction of

artificial nests and by the "invasion" of eagles from neighbouring countries.

Eugenijus Drobelis  
Environmental Protection Department  
Juozapaviciaus 9, 2670 Vilnius, Lithuania

Figure 1.

