

PREFACE

The end of XXth Century brought some significant changes in the ornithological science. More and more publications appeared to have focus on the conservation aspects. And more and more bird conservation organisations become involved in data gathering and serious research oriented towards bird conservation issues. Another significant change, at least for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, marked the end of the Century: intensive international cooperation in both ornithological science and in the conservation of birds. Inspired and strongly supported by BirdLife International, taken up by the scientific community, massive exchange of data and research, ideas, know-how and conservation actions took place at multinational level. All these factors led to a giant step forward – sub-national conservation legislation, influence of common regional economic activities such as agriculture or forestry in favour of the birds and biodiversity conservation, a common European network of protected sites for birds, such as Natura 2000, etc.

Bulgaria is an integral part of this process and with the 34% of its territory, designated as Natura 2000 protected sites, it can be given as a good example. The biggest challenge, however, is ahead – to enforce and turn into practice all the brilliant opportunities, which the national and EU legislation and biodiversity conservation instruments provide. And there is only one way to enhance it – strong scientific basis and justification for the conservation actions. And this is entirely valid for all other countries, from Austria to the West to Kazakhstan and Russia to the East.

The present publication is reflection of all the above mentioned processes. The 12 articles are the result of years of serious work of ornithologists from ten different countries, united by a single motivation – to preserve one of the most endangered bird species on the planet – the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*). Wide range of aspects varying from distribution and trends to distance tracking and conservation methods has been covered. The composition of authors and organisations and their results, published in the respectable *Acta zoologica bulgarica* are an excellent example of cooperation between scientists from universities and research institutes and such from the nature conservation organisations (NGOs). It is also a doubtless demonstration of the very high research abilities of the conservation NGOs and confirmation of the rightness of the governments, wisely relying on the enormous NGO capacity and motivation.

This is not just a nice and informative publication in your hands. It is a powerful tool which can make our world richer and better. Better for both the Imperial Eagles and our grand children. This is something deserving deep respect and acknowledgments.

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