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Migratory movements of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: contemporary and historical perspectives

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Abstract

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) mainly breeds in Serbian upper province Vojvodina, in 15 colonies, along big rivers, fishponds and artificial lakes. According to recoveries of ringed birds, Eastern European populations show dispersal movements, while during harsh winters they often move to Mediterranean or Black Sea. Data used in this study were divided in historical part, before 1993 when Centre for Animal Marking was established and contemporary part, from 1993 onward. Although ringing activities in Serbia started in 1908, until 1987 there had not been recorded any recovery of Great Cormorant ringed in Serbia and found abroad. Between 1987 and 1993, 68 recoveries had been reported. From 1993 until 2016, only 6 recoveries were found abroad. Contemporary analysis is based on 73 ringed birds, while historical is based on about 200 ringed birds. According to recoveries 69% of first – year old birds from both analyzed groups showed dispersal movements to surrounding countries, predominantly in Hungary. During migration and wintering, birds were found in Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Greece. Recoveries of wintering Great Cormorants ringed abroad were found mainly in Vojvodina. Birds originated from Baltic countries (predominantly Estonia) make 95% of foreign recoveries. First year birds make 43% of all recovered birds ringed in abroad. Illegal hunting and fishing have been identified as the most important threats within wintering areas. Lack of hunter's and fisherman's awareness to report ring of dead Cormorant would increase number of recoveries and better identification of migration routes and wintering areas.

Keywords: recoveries, ringing, Great Cormorant, wintering, historical, contemporary