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Nesting of the Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) at its hatching site
Hniezdenie orla krikľavého (*Aquila pomarina*) na mieste jeho vyliahnutia

Štefan DANKO & Boris MADERIČ

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Abstract: Colour rings with alphanumeric codes have been used on the Lesser Spotted Eagles since 2000. On April 24, 2007 an eagle with a yellow ring I9 was photographed in the "Ondavská vrchovina" highlands near the village of Lieskovec in Humenné district. It was found out that the eagle was ringed on the same site on July 4, 2002 as a chick on the nest. After further observations the adult male was spotted feeding its chick in the nest, which was located only 130 m from the one it hatched at. If it could be proved that the female at the nesting site, which has been regularly surveyed since 1985 has not changed, nesting of a son and a mother could not to be ruled out in this case.

Abstrakt: Od roku 2000 sa na Slovensku začalo používať krúžkovanie orlov krikľavých farebnými krúžkami s alfanumerickým kódom. Dňa 24. apríla 2007 sa podarilo odfotografovať na východnom Slovensku v Ondavskej vrchovine pri obci Lieskovec v okrese Humenné jedného orla so žltým krúžkom I9. Na základe toho sa zistilo, že jedinec bol označený na tej istej lokalite 4. júla 2002 ako mláďa na hniezde. Pozorovaním sa potvrdilo, že orol bol samec a kŕmil mláďa v hniezde, ktoré sa nachádzalo len 130 m od miesta jeho vyliahnutia. Pokiaľ nedošlo aj k výmene samice na hniezdnej lokalite, ktorá sa sleduje pravidelne už od roku 1985, nie je vylúčené, že v tomto prípade hniezdil syn s matkou.

Key words: Lesser Spotted Eagle, *Aquila pomarina*, ring recovery, fidelity, Slovakia

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Research of the Lesser Spotted Eagle has got a long tradition in Slovakia. In 1983, members of the Group for Research and Protection of Birds of Prey and Owls in Czechoslovakia became more interested in this species. So in 1986 they established a special working group focused on its research. An important part of the group's activities was an intensive programme of ringing eagle chicks (during 1983 only 8 chicks were ringed, however in 1986 this number increased to 41 chicks). Up to the end of the group's existence, in 1995, the most chicks ringed in one year were 80, which occurred in 1994. From 1934–1994, 553 Lesser Spotted Eagles were ringed in Slovakia. This was the highest number achieved by any European country where the species breeds. Thanks to ringing, the first data on migration and wintering of the Lesser Spotted Eagles were obtained. The data till the end of 1994 were published in Danko et al. (1996). A great disadvantage of traditional ringing is the fact that a ring is only likely to be read when the bird is shot, found injured or in rare occasions re-captured. However, more information about the biology of the species was wanted, and so color rings with alphanumeric codes that enable data to be obtained just through observation, has started to be used in Slovakia from 2000.

One of the objectives of the research was to find out where the young birds return to in the year following their fledgling and how far from their hatching site they start to breed. Until the end of 2004, traditional ringing has shown that individuals stay from as little as 4 to 550 km from their hatching site (Tab. 1). Only 2 records of birds returning to the exact same location have been known. The first one was from Lithuania after 11 years, the individual was found injured on April 24, 1940 and the second one from the former East Prussia (nowadays a part of Poland Russia in the Kaliningrad district), the individual was found sick on September 13, 1938 (Danko et al. 1996). It is very likely that the individuals were also breeding at the sites but the exact distance from their hatching site is

Tab. 1. Distance between a nesting site and a hatching site
Tab. 1. Vzdialenosti miest hniezdenia od miesta vyliahnutia

Country / Krajina	Years since hatching / Obdobie od vyliahnutia [roky]	State of the record / Stav nálezu	Date / Dátum	Distance from the hatching site / Vzdialenosť od miesta vyliahnutia [km]	Direction / Smer preletu	Reference / Citácia
Slovakia / Slovensko	5	breeding male / hniezdiaci samec	16. 7. 1995	4,0	SE / JV	Danko et al. 1996
Slovakia / Slovensko	5	breeding male / hniezdiaci samec	16. 7. 1995	4,7	SE / JV	Meyburg et al. 2005
Slovakia / Slovensko	4	nonbreeding male / nehniezdiaci samec	12. 7. 2004	8,0	N / S	
Poland / Poľsko	4	dead / uhynutý	2. 7. 2001	16,4	NE / SV	
Slovakia / Slovensko	21	breeding male / hniezdiaci samec	2. 7. 2004	17,0	WSW / ZJZ	
Slovakia / Slovensko	5	faiund exhaust / nájdený vysilený	9. 7. 2004	38,0	SW / JZ	
Germany / Nemecko	17	?	6. 8. 1971	39,0	SSW / JJZ	Danko et al. 1996
Germany / Nemecko	4	breeding female / hniezdiaca samica	17. 7. 2004	59,0	SE / JV	Meyburg et al. 2005
Latvia / Lotyšsko	5	shot / zastrelený	19. 6. 1955	80,0	SW / JZ	Danko et al. 1996
Slovakia / Slovensko	7	breeding female / hniezdiaca samica	29. 7. 1996	90,0	NNE / SSV	Meyburg et al. 2005
Poland / Poľsko	7	killed by electricity / zabitý el. prúdom	16. 6. 1996	240,0	SW / JZ	Meyburg et al. 2005
Poland / Poľsko	6	dead / uhynutý	31. 7. 1993	272,0	SW / JZ	Danko et al. 1996
Russia / Rusko	2	?	26. 4. 1986	492,0	N / S	Danko et al. 1996
Belarus / Bielorusko	26	dead / uhynutý	7. 8. 1957	550,0	SSW / JJZ	

missing. More recent data were obtained by observation of color ringed individuals.

The first author was able to take a picture of a ringed Lesser Spotted Eagle (it was ringed with both, a color ring and a traditional aluminium ring) in the "Ondavská vrchovina" highlands near the village of Lieskovec in Humenné district. It was possible to read both rings – a yellow plastic ring had a code I9 and an aluminium ring BL 012 (Fig. 1). On August 7, 2007 the individual was observed (Fig. 2) and determined to be a male and photographed again whilst carrying prey to its nest (Fig. 3). This adult male was ringed by the second author on July 4, 2002 (Fig. 4). The biometric data collected intimated that the individual was a male. This male together with a female built their new nest in 2007. It was found on July 28 and subsequently a single chick successfully fledged from the nest. These findings suggest that in this case it was a mother and son breeding together as the new nest was only 130 m away from the nest where the male hatched and successfully fledged in 2002. At present it is the nearest recorded observation of a Lesser Spotted Eagle returning to its hatching site. The former nest is still in very good condition. Out of all the nests built in their home range, this nest was the most frequently used. The Lesser Spotted Eagle pair at Lieskovec has been regularly monitored by the authors, the first author has monitored it from 1985 to 1997 and the latter from 1998 till the present.

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Fig. 1. Lesser Spotted Eagle with a ring I9. Lieskovec, 24 April 2007.
Obr. 1. Orol krikľavý s krúžkom I9. Lieskovec, 24. apríl 2007.



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Fig. 2. Lesser Spotted Eagle I9 at breeding site, 7 August 2007.
Obr. 2. Orol krikľavý I9 na hniezdnej lokalite, 7. august 2007.



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Fig. 3. The male I9 carrying vole. Lieskovec, 7 August 2007.
Obr. 3. Samec I9 nesie hraboša. Lieskovec, 7. august 2007.



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Fig. 4. The male I9 as a young on the nest before ringing. Lieskovec, July 4, 2002.
Obr. 4. Samec I9 ako mláďa na hniezde pred krúžkovaním. Lieskovec, 4. júl 2002.

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