

NOTES ABOUT THE CONDITION AND STATUS OF BIRDS IN SHIRVAN NATIONAL PARK

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Notice

According to the category of IUCN (1a), Shirvan National Park (SNP) has the greatest area among 5 national parks, which acts nowadays as a special protected area of Azerbaijan. SNP was founded in 2003 and represents semi-desert and steppe ecosystem. The observations were held during 2001-2006 before and after foundation of National Park on the place of Shirvan State Reserve and Bendovan State sanctuary. Generally field researches were conducted during summer fire practice of students, so summer complex of ornitofauna was researched more regular. Seasonal dynamics was researched only in 2006.

Literature review

Study area

Location: Azerbaijan and the study region mark one of the most eastern spot on the fringe of geographic Europe. The study area is located within Azerbaijan's Transcaucasian Kura-Aras lowland, the Greater Caucasus border to the north and the Lesser Caucasus to the south.

Climate: The study region is characterized by arid subtropical climate (Museyibov, 1998). Continental climatic effects prevail, as the surrounding mountains cut off maritime tropic air from the north and west, whereas the opening of the Kura-Aras basin to the east encourages continental tropic air and polar air to stream in (Franz, 1973). Summers are dry and hot. Winter temperatures are rather mild and rarely reaching 0⁰ C.

Plant cover: The semi-desert formation at SNP is represented by six associations, as there are: 1. Suaedetum, 2. Artemisieto –Petrosimonietum, 3. Artemisieto- Ephemeretum, 4. Artemisieto – Salsoletum dendroica, 5. Psammophytetum, 6. Grasses – Annuals –Ephemeretum (Aliyev, Gadshiev, 1986).

Fauna complex: The main conservation object of SNP is the Goitred Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturoza*). Common mammals of the national park area are: Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Jungle cat (*Felis chaus*), Red Fox (*Vulpus vulpes*), Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*), European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and Badger (*Meles meles*) (Kovalev, 2000; Zuccow, 2005 – in the fauna chronik of the national park). Most characteristic and known reptiles are Levant Viper (*Vipera lebetina*), Dice snake (*Natrix tessellata*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Greek Tortoise (*Testudo grecca*), Caspian Turtle (*Mauremus caspica*), Lake frog (*Rana ridibunda*), Green Toad (*Bufo viridis*). Basically nothing is known on insects and entomofauna the region. The Caspian Sea, not

under protection yet, is especially important for the species of Sturgeon inhabiting the Caspian. In spite of all mentioned, the appearance of the rich ornithofauna of Azerbaijan has its significant place in the SNP. Imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), Little Bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*), Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), Black Francolin (*Francolinus Francolinus*), Pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*) and Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) are globally significant species of ornithofauna in SNP (The chronicle of the preserve – Etzold et al 2004; Succov 2005).

The analysis of the material

Exceptional diversity of the fauna in the area, which belongs to the semi desert landscape and which at first view does not possess rich flora, became of interest to us after our first excursion in the area of National Park. Data on Bandovan and Shirvan preserves are not included into this material, as our observations, performed during the course of 6 years (2001-2006) cover only dry landscape of SNP and the water area of lakes created as a result of Shirvan collector exploitation.

The oil well operations of “Shirvan Oil” as well as the intervals during the operation of collector seriously influenced the variety of species of avifauna in the Shirvan State Preserve. Above mentioned factors mostly influence water birds, which use the water in the lake during the winter stay and migration. As you can see in the graph below, the number of the species (26) registered in 2001 is the highest in comparison to other years. This is explained by the fact that the collector worked non-stop during that year. We observed the sharp decrease of water level in Gizil-Gaz Lake and in the ponds around it during the course of subsequent 2 years.

In general, various formations created by the vegetation life in the area of the National Park create conditions for the abundant variety of fauna. Therefore, as the drying of the lakes results in the extinction of water and water shore vegetation, the changes in the number of insects and other invertebrate animals, which create another key circle in the food chain as well as reptiles and birds raven upon them is inevitable. Although, once the idea of purposeful drying of lakes created big anxiety, then protection measures of the water and marsh areas in accordance with the Ramsar convention influenced SNP as well. The observations performed on the flyovers and day-and night clinics built in SNP let us say the following:

31 out of 66 species registered during the nesting period are water and water shore birds (Grebes, cormorants, pelicans, storks, geese and sandpipers). 21 species are the representatives of perching birds. The wild birds are the most widely spread group in the area in comparison to the bird fauna of the republic (8 out of 36 species). Other species are the members of gallinules, cranes, doves and nightjars. When speaking of numbers, coots among the water

birds and little bustards among the ground birds comprise the majority during the nesting period.

(See table 1).

According to M. Patrikeyev (1991) 76 species of waterbirds and 9 species of predatory birds are registered here during nesting period. The winter helicopter count of 1993 has shown number in 6034 wintering waterbirds from which one pelicans - 63 individuals, flamingo- about 300, swans - 742, ducks - 3354, harriers - 10 and coot - 1187 (Sultanov, Mustafayev, 1994).

In the winter, numerous larks, finches and buntings are all around, and Little Bustards gather in large flocks in the vast plain of the park (S. Schmidt, K.Gauger, N.Agayeva, 2008). During the nesting, species with protection status are met in the area of the National Park: White and Dalmatian pelicans (*Pelecanus roseus* and *P. onocrotalus*), Pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Red – crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), Black vulture, Griffon Vulture, Kestrel, Black francolin, Purple Swamphen, Little Bustard, Stone Curlew Black Tern, Turtle - Dove, Nightjar, Kingfisher, Barn swallow, Calandra Lark, Crested Lark (Bird Life International, 2004).

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHIRVAN NATIONAL PARK

№	Species	7. 06.01	19. 06. 04	02. 07.05	26.02.06	13.05.06	05.11.06	25.11.06
1	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>						4	
2	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>						8	
3	<i>P. onocrotalus</i>						1	10
4	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				1			
5	<i>Ph. pygmaeus</i>				20-25	1		
6	<i>Egretta alba</i>	+				12	3	2
7	<i>Eg. garzetta</i>	+				1	3	1
8	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	+	2	+	1		1	
9	<i>A. purpurea</i>	+						
10	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	1						
11	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>						4	
12	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		7		8			
13	<i>C. cygnus</i>				1			
14	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	+			120-150			
15	<i>T.tadorna</i>				53			
16	<i>Anser albifrons</i>						2	
17	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				2		10	7
18	<i>A. angustirostris</i>						4	
19	<i>Netta rufina</i>							15
20	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				?	1		10
21	<i>A. nyroca</i>							
22	<i>A.fuligula</i>							
23	<i>A.marila</i>							
24	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					1		
25	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	1						1
26	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>							1

27	<i>Aegypus monachus</i>					2	1
28	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>					2	
29	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	+		2 ♀ + 1 ♂	4	7	5
30	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		+				
31	<i>Yirtici- sp.</i>						
32	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	+ By the voice	7 ♂	By the voice	3-4/1 ha		5 (2 ♂, 3 ♀)
33	<i>Porhyrio porhyrio</i>		+	By the voice			
34	<i>Vanellochettusia leucura</i>		1				
35	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		2				
36	<i>Fulica atra</i>			3 eggs, 1 juv.	>1000	1	1000 1250
37	<i>Otis tetrax</i>				<1000	2 (on the road)	40-60
38	<i>Burchinus oedicnemus</i>			2		1	
39	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	+	10-12 pair				
40	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		5				2
41	<i>L. ridibundus</i>	+	3				
42	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	+					
43	<i>Chilodonia niger</i>			20-25			
44	<i>Ch.leucoptera</i>			<100		7	
45	<i>Columba livia</i>	4			+	adi	
46	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>					2	
47	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	+		1			
48	<i>St. senegalensis species</i>	6 + nest					
49	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>						1
50	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	1	+	+	6		
51	<i>Upupa epops</i>		+	+			
52	<i>Gorvus frugilegus</i>						9
53	<i>G.cornix</i>	+	+	+	+	+	4 +
54	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	+		+		25-30/1ha	
55	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	3					
56	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>		+				
57	<i>Lanius minor</i>	+					
58	<i>Melnocorypha calandra</i>		+			numerous	
59	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	+	+			2	
60	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		+			7-8	
61	<i>Pica pica</i>	4 nest			3/1ha	3/1ha	9 2/1ha
62	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	+				common 3/1ha	
63	<i>Turdus merula</i>					3 + 1 nest	
64	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			3			
65	<i>Passer montanus</i>			25	48	14	
66	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	+					

These indicators emphasize how SNP needs attention, care and protection. We consider that the area is now open for the observations in terms of ecological forecasting which is convenient for the modern requirements of the

environmental protection, and formation of public opinion in positive direction will be achieved as it plays a great role in the activity of the national park.

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**ŞİRVAN MİLLİ PARKINDA QUŞLARIN VƏZİYYƏTİ
VƏ STATUSUNA DAİR QEYDLƏR**

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Məqalədə Şirvan Dövlət Qoruğu ərazisində Milli Park elan olunanadək və sonrakı 3 il ərzində aparılan müşahidələr öz əksini tapmışdır (2001-2006-cı illər). Əsasən ekskursiyalar tələbələrin çöl-istirahət təcrübəsi dövrünə təsadüf etdiyindən ornitofaunanın yay kompleksi daha müntəzəm, mövsümlər üzrə isə 2006-cı ildə ardıcıl müşahidələr aparılmışdır. Nəticədə qeydə alınan 66 növün rast gəlinmə dövrü, sayı və yuvalamasına dair məlumatlarla yanaşı, həmçinin İUCN-nin kateqoriyalarına uyğun mühafizə statuslu növlərin də siyahısı dəqiqləşdirilmişdir.