

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* in Estonia

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In Estonia both the White-tailed Eagle and the Golden Eagle have been under protection for a long time as rare species to be preserved for posterity. Both species nest in remote forests, the former near bodies of water, the latter in pinewoods growing on raised bogs. The state of the Golden Eagle population is fairly good, but the fertility of the White-tailed Eagle shows a decline and its numbers are decreasing.

Since the mid-twentieth century the numbers of nearly all species of eagles, falcons and hawks have shown a noticeable decline.

The White-tailed Eagle in Estonia. The first written reports on the occurrence of the White-tailed Eagle in the Baltic countries date from the late eighteenth century. Since that time references can be found to their molestation by hunters. In 1815, the White-tailed Eagle was in no way a rare bird in Estonia, particularly on the shores of Lake Peipsi. Many other references dating from the nineteenth century call attention to nesting-places which are well known to this day. A statement by LOUDON (1895) merits special attention, since it says that the White-tailed Eagle is most frequent on the island of Saaremaa. The numbers of the White-tailed Eagle in those years must have been at least thirty pairs. Probably the Eagle occurred in about the same numbers up to the beginning of this century. Records collected in the 1930s also testify to the comparative frequency of the White-tailed Eagle,

although its numbers in Estonia were estimated at only ten certainly breeding pairs.

In the period 1945—65 there are reports from about 30 different localities where the species nested; these include 12 nesting places in the western part of the Estonian mainland, at least 10 places on the Estonian islands, and 4 places in east and south-east Estonia. In addition, there are unconfirmed reports of ten more nesting-places. Evidently, the annual number of the breeding pairs of the White-tailed Eagle in those times was at least 15.

The numbers began to decrease from the mid-1960s. In the period 1965—1976 the White-tailed Eagle has been reported during the breeding season from 25 different places. Actual nesting has been reported from 10 different localities on 20 occasions. These reports show that in the post-war years the number of breeding pairs has decreased from 15—20 to 10 to 15 in this decade. The breeding success has declined greatly. The last relatively favourable nesting years were 1966 and 1967,

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Pairs of White-tailed Eagle at nesting places	8	8	8	7	10	9	9
Steadily present pairs	7	4	3	3	2	3	3
Of the latter bred successfully (in brackets number of offspring)	2(2)	—	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	—	1(1)
Total number of pairs observed	15	12	11	10	12	12	12

when altogether 6 pairs nested with success. Since 1969, none of the six White-tailed Eagles inhabiting the islands of west Estonia has nested successfully. Of the 6 pairs nesting on the mainland of west Estonia in 1969—1975 only 2 (each on two occasions — in 1969 and 1970) bred successfully. Up to 4 pairs have been active in the area of Lake Peipsi-Pskov in the territory of the Estonian S.S.R. These have shown the best breeding success (two pairs raised 6 young in 1970—1976).

The White-tailed Eagle in neighbouring areas. According to the data for 1970, fifteen pairs of White-tailed Eagles nested in the Leningrad Region. According to earlier data, it did not nest in Latvia after 1955 (probably 2—3 pairs in the 1950s) until the 1970s, when one pair produced offspring twice (in 1971 and 1975). In Sweden there are at present up to 80 pairs, but as a rule their fertility is low (0.3 offspring per active pair). Finland boasts about 30 pairs; however, only a few of them breed. In the whole European part of the Soviet Union there are altogether about 200 pairs, and in the whole of Europe about 1 000 pairs (HELANDER 1975).

Clutch sizes in Estonia were 3×1 , 4×2 and 2×3 . The numbers of fledged young were 24×1 , 9×2 and 2×3 .

The Golden Eagle in Estonia. During the last hundred years the number of the Golden Eagles observed has decreased considerably. Early in this cent-

ury 20 to 30 pairs may have nested in Estonia. In 1939 only 4 nesting places were known, but in 1970 there were 10. In the period 1945—1976 reports came in about Golden Eagles, 7 in the Alutaguse region in north-east Estonia, 6 in central Estonia, and 7 in the mainland part of west and south-west Estonia. These 20 nesting places appear to belong to about 15 pairs. In addition, there have been unconfirmed reports of 10 further nesting places. During the last ten years Golden Eagles have nested in up to 12 localities, breeding being successful in 4 to 6 cases per year. Taking into account the difficult access to the nesting places in outlying parts of pine woods on bogs (which makes it difficult to discover all existing nests) as well as the observational data for the last ten years, we can state that at least 12 pairs of Golden Eagles breed in Estonia, raising a total of at least 5 to 6 offspring annually. It seems that the Golden Eagle is much more fertile than the White-tailed Eagle.

Numbers of Golden Eagles in neighbouring areas. The numbers of the Golden Eagle in Finland are estimated at up to 100 pairs. In Sweden there are 50 to 60 nesting pairs, in the Leningrad Region only 1 to 2 pairs, in Latvia 2 to 3 pairs.

In Estonia clutch sizes were 6×1 and 21×2 eggs, the numbers of fledged young were 2×1 and 19×2 .

Protection of the White-tailed and Golden Eagles. All eagles are protected under the Nature Conservation Law of

the Estonian S.S.R. Their killing, persecution and any kind of disturbance are prohibited, and so is destruction of the nesting places. Even the photographing and filming of eagles are forbidden without special permission from the nature conservation authorities. Since 1972, the fine for offences against this law has been raised markedly.

To sum up, in Estonia the Golden Eagle has much better prospects than the White-tailed Eagle. The fertility of the Golden Eagle has not deteriorated markedly, and its nesting places in remote woods are well protected. The fertility of the White-tailed Eagle is very low, its nesting places often lie in the vicinity of human settlements, and its protection is much more complicated.

Selostus: Merikotka ja kotka Virossa

Virossa pesivän merikotkakannan arvioidaan olleen ainakin 30 paria tämän vuosisadan alussa, varmasti 10, luultavasti enemmänkin 1930-luvulla ja vähintään 15 paria 1945—1965. Parimäärät

alkoivat vähetä 1960-luvun puolivälissä. Jaksolta 1965—1976 tunnetaan 10 eri pesäpaikkaa (20 pesintää; arvioitu pesimäkanta 10—15). Tekstissä on taulukoitu (ylhäältä alas) pesäpaikoilla tavatut parit, pesäpaikoilla jatkuvasti esiintyneet parit, onnistuneesti pesineet parit (suluissa poikasmäärä) sekä todettujen parien kokonaismäärä. Pesimätulos on viimeisen kymmenen vuoden aikana heikentynyt selvästi. Vielä v. 1966—1967 yhteensä kuusi paria onnistui pesinnässään. Vuoden 1969 jälkeen vain kaksi pesintää on onnistunut läntisessä Virossa; Peipsijärven-Pihkovanjärven alueella Itä-Virossa kaksi paria tuotti yhteensä 6 jälkeläistä v. 1970—1976.

Leningradin alueella pesi v. 1970 yhteensä 15 merikotkaparia. Tällä vuosikymmenellä yksi pari on pesinyt Latviassa (jälkeläisiä 1971 ja 1975). Neuvostoliiton Euroopan-puoleisessa osassa pesinee 200 paria, noin viidennes Euroopan kannasta.

Kotkan pesimäkannan arvioidaan olleen 20—30 paria vuosisadan alussa, v. 1970 tunnettiin 10 pesäpaikkaa. Onnistuneita pesintöjä on viimeisen kymmenen vuoden aikana tullut tietoon vuosittain 4—6. Viron pesimäkanta (arviolta ainakin 12 paria) tuottaa 5—6 jälkeläistä vuodessa. Leningradin alueella kotkia on 1—2 paria, Latviassa 2—3 paria.

Kaikilla kotkilla on lainsuoja Viron SNT:ssa, jopa luvaton valokuvaus on pesillä kielletty. Vahingonteosta voidaan langettaa 500 ruplan sakko. Kotkan tulevaisuus näyttää Virossa valoisammalta kuin merikotkan, koska kotkan pesimätulos on selvästi parempi ja pesäpaikat sijaitsevat syrjäisemmillä seuduilla.