

On the activities of amateur ornithologists in Estonia

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More than 290 amateur ornithologists work under the auspices of the Ornithological Section of the Estonian Naturalists' Society. Their primary activity is the carrying out of phenological observations on birds. Amateur ornithologists also render great services in the ringing of birds. Observations on the nesting ecology of birds are increasing steadily (about 3000 nest cards are received annually). The nesting places of the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) and its breeding results have been recorded. Amateurs have also been directed to study the avifauna of marshes and bogs, and of inland waters and marine islands, as well as local bird faunas. Amateurs have established the occurrence and breeding of a number of rare bird species in Estonia.

The Ornithological Section of the Estonian Naturalists' Society is engaged in roping in amateur ornithologists for the study of birds and coordinating their efforts. Over 290 people have registered with the ornithological Section and take part in projects under the auspices of the Section. In addition, there are hundreds of peoples who on their own initiative occasionally inform the Section about birds they have observed or respond to the appeals of the Section. The network of collaborators covers the whole territory of the republic, being densest in west Estonia and in the environs of Tallinn and Tartu.

Observations on bird phenology occupy a central place in the activities of amateur ornithologists. Such observations were organized in Estonia from 1923 onwards for six years, the number of participants being about twenty. The phenological network was put on a firmer foundation in 1936; it functioned with nearly a hundred observers up to 1940, but disintegrated under

wartime conditions. The present network was organized in 1948, uniting about two hundred observers. Detailed data are collected on the passage of the Crane (*Grus grus*) and of geese. Attention is also paid to wintering and invasion birds. In recent years about 80 persons have been engaged in carrying out counts of wintering waterfowl. Many of the observers have had years of practice, in a few cases as much as forty years.

The phenological data collected in this way have been analysed up to 1966 and published. The data gathered in the years 1967—1976 are now being processed. The analysis has been carried out by amateurs (particularly L. and I. ROOTSMÄE). The observational data obtained have afforded valuable supplements to our knowledge of the arrival and departure of migrants.

Amateurs have made a notable contribution to the field of bird ringing. A great many enthusiasts have ringed hundreds of birds, a few of them even

a thousand or two thousand birds during a year. The total number of birds ringed annually by amateurs runs into tens of thousands.

Amateur ornithologists have taken an active part in the ringing operations "Baltic" and "Parus". Particularly good results were obtained in the study of the breeding ecology of the Great Tit (*Parus major*). This work was conducted under the supervision of HENN VILBASTE. In six years (1970—1975) over 60 000 Great Tits were ringed in Estonia, mostly by amateurs.

Amateur ornithologists have taken a great interest in the ringing of gulls on the territory of the Matsalu State Nature Reserve and its surroundings. A major effort was made in the spring of 1972, when about 140 persons ringed a total of over 30 000 birds. Later this work has continued on a smaller scale.

Between 20 and 30 persons are engaged in observations of breeding birds. The collection of data, primarily on the breeding ecology of passerines, rests entirely on the shoulders of amateurs. In recent years some 3000 nest cards have been received annually. Carpenter ENDEL EDULA deserves special mention as a front-ranking Estonian amateur ornithologist. He has put up 200 nest-boxes in the vicinity of his home and has ringed breeding birds in great numbers. In 20 years he has found close upon 10 000 bird's nests and filled in nest cards on most of them. On thrushes alone, he has sent in 3000 cards. The treatment and publication of the nest cards and other related data has been planned by the Ornithological Section to be carried out in the next few years.

Observations on the nesting places and breeding success of the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) have become very popular among the general public. Appeals of the Ornithological Section

have met with a lively response. Annually 200 to 300, sometimes as many as 500, persons have sent in reports on the nesting places and the number of offspring of the White Stork. There are also enthusiasts who make regular observations on tens of inhabited nests.

For many years breeding observations on the White Stork have been organized and stimulated by HEINRICH VEROMAN, a philologist by education. In the course of 20 years he has written 50 scientific papers, of which a third have been devoted to the White Stork. His merits are great as a popularizer of ornithology, a long-time secretary to the Ornithological Section, and now its vice-chairman.

A number of amateurs have assisted ornithologists to study the avifauna of marshes and bogs, of inland waters and marine islands. Other have achieved outstanding results in the study of the local bird fauna. Considering his services to ornithology, amateur ornithologist JOANN KALLAS of Hiiumaa has attained the level of a professional. For many years he has collected data on the abundant bird fauna of Käina Bay. On his initiative Käina Bay was proclaimed a bird sanctuary. Another keen ornithologist, ARKADI IRDT, has for years carried out regular observations in the Nigula peat bog. EET TUULE, a fitter from the Harju District, has been following the population density of the bird fauna of his native place and the changes in it with great persistence since 1959. His observations on invasion birds are unique in the republic for their continuity and precision.

We are indebted to amateur ornithologists for observations of a number of rare birds, several of which were identified in Estonia for the first time. The list includes *Melanitta perspicillata*, *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* and *Luscinia calliope*. Amateurs also de-

monstrated the breeding in Estonia of *Recurvirostra avosetta*, *Phoenicurus ochrurus*, *Tyto alba*, *Anas penelope*, *Cinclus cinclus* and *Motacilla cinerea*.

The Ornithological Section has tried as far as possible to assist amateurs in their activities by sending them to different parts of the republic for the carrying out of various tasks at the expense of the Estonian Naturalists' Society, by providing them with the necessary equipment, etc. The services rendered by the more zealous amateurs have been acknowledged by certificates of honour and by the presentation of ornithological publications.

Selostus: Lintuharrastajien toiminnasta Virossa

Viron Luonnontutkijain seuran lintutieteelliseen jaostoon kuuluu yli 290 ornitologia, joiden lisäksi

satat henkilöt toimittavat jaostolle havaintojaan. Eniten havainnoitsijoita on Viron länsiosissa sekä Tallinnassa ja Tartossa. Muuttohavaintojen keruu on sodan jälkeen aloitettu uudelleen v. 1948 (n. 200 havainnoitsijaa); erityistä huomiota on kiinnitetty kurjen ja hanhien muuttoon. Myös vaelluslajeista ja talvehtijoista kootaan havaintoja. Talvehtivia vesilintuja on laskettu (n. 80 havainnoitsijaa). Fenologinen aineisto on julkaistu vuoteen 1966 asti, ja vuosien 1967—1976 aineistoa valmistellaan painokuntoon. Harrastajien panos on ollut tuntuva myös rengastuksessa ja laajoissa "Baltic"- ja "Parus"-projekteissa. Varsinkin talitiaisen rengastus on ollut tuloksekasta (v. 1970—1975 yli 60 000 rengastusta). Vuosittain palauteaan noin 3 000 pesäkorttia. Suuren yleisön avustuksella on tutkittu kattohaikaran pesintää (tietoja jopa 500 henkilöltä vuodessa). Harrastajat ovat myös laatineet faunistisia selvityksiä eri alueilta sekä avustaneet monissa luonnonbiotooppien linnuston tutkimuksissa. Harrastajien ansiosta ovat tietoon tulleet myös monet harvinaisuuksia koskevat havainnot (uusina Virolle mm. pilkkaniska, mustakaularastas, rubiinisatakieli; uusina pesimälajeina avosetti, mustaleppälintu, tornipöllö, haapana, koskikara sekä vuorivästäräkki).