NEW RECOVERIES OF COLOR MARKED EURASIAN SPOONBILLS (*Platalea leucorodia*), WITH LONGEVITY RECORDS AND SIGNS OF HIGH TERRITORIAL FIDELITY

KISS J. Botond, MARINOV E. Mihai, SÁNDOR D. Attila

Abstract. The authors add new information to the previously published information on the recovery of the rings of the 219 spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia* Linnaeus, 1758), marked in the north of Sinoie lagoon, Romania, in 2003-2005. Up to now 33 individual birds were resighted (15.7%). One of the marked birds was observed 5 times at a breeding colony ca 75 km to the north to its hatching site, while another was observed 17 km from its hatching area after 5813 days. These new observations and especially the longevity records show the importance of colour marking in large wading birds and would serve as justification for the continuation of the project.

Keywords: breeding, Danube Delta, migration, ringing, Romania.

Rezumat. Recapturi noi de lopătar (*Platelea leucorodia*), cu un record de longevitate și fidelitate teritorială accentuată. Autorii adaugă informații noi la cele publicate anterior cu privire la recuperarea inelelor de pe cei 219 lopătari (*Platalea leucorodia* Linnaeus, 1758), marcați în nordul lagunei Sinoie, România, în 2003-2005. Până în prezent s-au obținut date despre 33 de păsări (15.7%). Unul dintre lopătari a fost regăsit în cursul anilor, a patra și a cincea oară, la o colonie de cuibărit la 75 km de la locul inelării. Al doilea prezintă recordul de până acuma a supraviețuirii, fiind regăsit după 5813 zile de la data inelării, la 17 km de la colonia de origine. Recordurile de longevitate și fidelitate teritorială obținute ar justifica continuarea acțiunilor de marcare al lopătarilor, cu inele de plastic color.

Cuvinte cheie: lopătari, marcări, fidelitate teritorială, longevitate.

Post-breeding dispersal of the Eurasian spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia* Linnaeus, 1758) is largely unknown in Romania, with only a handful of ringing recoveries using metal rings being published earlier: two recoveries in Egypt and one each in the Republic of Moldova, Sudan and Kenya (CĂTUNEANU 1999; SMART et al., 2007). In the meantime, more and more diverse data is provided by the use of the color rings on spoonbills breeding in the lagoons of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. A total of 219 nestlings were marked with individual color rings in the period 2003-2005, thus marking ca. 5-7 % of the nestlings of the of 1100-1500 pairs of spoonbills breeding in Romania in that period. Altogether 33 individual birds (15.7% of all ringed) were recovered over the years, mostly by resightings (photos or visual observations), but also as reports of birds shot or found dead, with most individuals seen on multiple dates and countries. Recoveries were reported from ten countries, geographically falling into an irregular polygon, with peaks in Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Turkey, Oman, Israel and Tunisia. The longest distance an individual bird travelled was 3814 km from the breeding colony, and the longest period of ring-bearing was 3651 days (KISS et al., 2007, 2019).

Here we intend to report three new recoveries, which considerably extend the longevity records of the species in Romania and highlight the territorial fidelity of the species. The bird marked with the UX - UX color plastic ring, identified earlier in three occasions, was also photographed twice in the area of its former resightings (in each case at a distance of ca. 75 km from the ringing site, here it was observed yearly from 2014). This individual was ringed in 2004, thus bearing the color marks for more than 5430 days (Fig. 1a, b). However, the longevity record is held by another individual observed on 15 May 2019 at a distance of 17 km from its hatching island and 5813 days after its ringing.

Overall, the above observations – in addition to their record character – highlight the utility of color marking method and advocate for further continuation of individual color ringing, especially in the case of long legged species (including the spoonbill). The continuation of ringing is also important, as the chance of new recoveries to be made (and new information provided) drastically decreases after an initial period.

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[1]Kiss J. Botond, [1]Marinov Mihai, [2]Sándor D. Attila
1. Danube Delta National Institute for Research and Development, Str. Babadag 165, Tulcea 820112, Romania.
2. University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Parasitology and Parasitic Diseases, Calea Mănăștur 3-5, Cluj-Napoca 400372, Romania
Author responsible for correspondence: Kiss J. Botond, E-mail: jbkiss03@yahoo.com

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a.

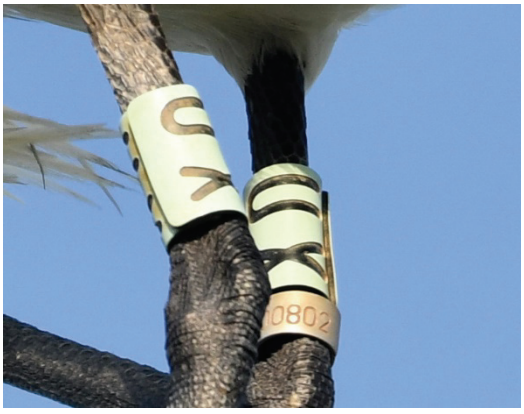
b.

Figure 1a, b. Specimen of Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) – remarkable territorial fidelity (Photo. Sigrid Lange).