

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE WHITE-TAILED LAPWING
(*Vanellus leucurus* - Syn. *Chettusia leucura*, *Vanellochettusia leucura*,
CHARADRIIFORMES, AVES) FROM DOBROGEA - ROMANIA IN 2021
AND A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW REGARDING THE PRESENCE
OF THIS SPECIES IN THE COUNTRY**

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Abstract. The White-tailed Lapwing – *Vanellus leucurus* (Lichtenstein, 1823), a very rare Asian erratic species for Romania, appeared in the country with an invasive character in 2000, forming several diffuse nesting colonies along the Dobrogea coasts. In 2001, several pairs nested in the Vadu/Constanța area. The phenomenon was considered a territorial expansion by pulsations, but for two decades it did not stabilize, as specimens were only seen passing by. At the level of 2021, a summary was made of the observations in Dobrogea and a literature review of the publications dedicated to the species at the level of Romania was performed.

Keywords: White-tailed Lapwing, Dobrogea-Romania, 2021, bibliographical review.

Rezumat. Observații asupra nagâțului cu coada albă (*Vanellus leucurus* – sin. *Chettusia leucura*, *Vanellochettusia leucura*, Charadriiformes, Aves) din Dobrogea – România, în 2021 și un review literar al publicațiilor referitoare la prezența acestei specii în țară. Nagâțul cu coada albă (*Vanellus leucurus*), specie asiatică eratică foarte rară pentru România, a apărut în țară cu caracter invazional în 2000, formând câteva colonii difuze de cuibărit de-a lungul coastelor dobrogene. În 2001 câteva perechi au mai cuibărit în zona Vadu / Constanța. Fenomenul a fost considerat drept o expansiune teritorială prin pulsație, dar timp de două decenii aceasta nu s-a stabilizat, fiind observate doar exemplare trecătoare. La nivelul anului 2021 s-a făcut un bilanț al observațiilor dobrogene și un review literar al publicațiilor consacrate speciei la nivel de România.

Cuvinte cheie: Nagâțul cu coada albă, Dobrogea-România, 2021, review literar.

The White-tailed Lapwing - *Vanellus leucurus* (Lichtenstein, 1823) is a very rare Asian species and little known for the Romanian ornithofauna. This bird was considered an erratic species in Romania, until the end of the last century, its presence being probed only by two specimens observed from 1895 (LINȚIA, 1955; ROSETTI-BĂLĂNESCU, 1957) and a few later observations (KISS, 1981, 1985; DIAZ PORTERO, 1999; WEBER, 1972, 1978, 1981, 1983), all from Dobrogea, with two exceptions from the inside of the country at Cefa-Bihor, in 1994 and in 2000, near Brașov (IONESCU & HODOR, 2021). After these intermittent sightings, in the 20th century the species appeared with an invasive character in the year 2000, forming several diffuse nesting colonies along the Dobrogea coasts, successfully breeding on a portion of approximately 110 km length of the Romanian shore between the Chilia Veche and Săcele localities being registered in five locations with at least 43 and at most 75 individuals. Their nesting in these areas has been successful (KISS & SZABÓ, 2000a, 2000c, 2000d, 2000e, 2000f, 2001a; RENAUDIER, 2000). Likewise, another nesting case is known from the following year. On these occasions, information on the appetitive and reproductive behaviour of the species, among the first in Europe, was observed and subsequently published. From inside Romania we have only one observation, from Transylvania (KISS & SZABÓ, 2000b, 2000d, 2001b; KISS et al., 2001). As it was later outlined, the appearance of the white-tailed lapwing in Romania was part of the time expansion with an invasive touch, reaching other European countries. Solitary specimens have been reported in Finland, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Hungary, and even in Sweden two specimens have been recorded. Erratic appearances, of course, without nesting. Most probably the list is incomplete, but the solitary occurrences from other areas are clearly different from the Dobrogea ones, where the species has established itself and nested successfully although in small numbers (MUNTEANU, 2013). After 2002 we do not have new nesting data, though during the following decades the species appeared sporadically, only solitary birds or small groups, without being able to document subsequent nesting.

With the present short note, we consider useful to point out the reports of this bird: a brief list of general literature about the species (List A, not all cited in the text) as well as its presence in specialized publications in the country (List B), after a cycle of two decades, in 2021.

Only two observations from 2019 and one from each 2009 and 2007 appear in the Rombird lists, then three observations from 2019, all, with one exception, on the southern end of the Sinoie lagoon, also 1-2 specimens. In 2021, the White-tailed Lapwing was also reported in the Vadu / Constanța area, where most of the previous data come from another location in Techirghiol / Constanța. The spatial position of the two areas is shown in Fig. 1.

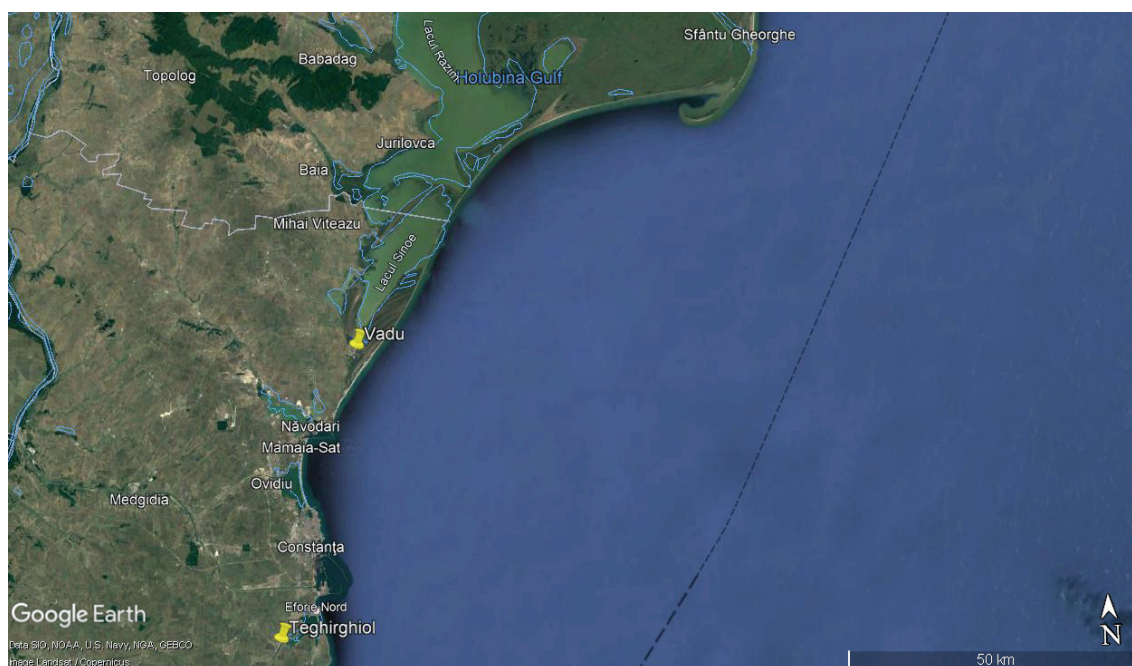


Figure 1. Spatial position of areas where White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) was observed in Dobrogea/Romania during 2021 (Sources: Google Earth, processed Kiss Botond).

The situation of our own observations and those taken through ROMBIRD, or direct information received from another sources, are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about the presence of the White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) from Dobrogea / Romania in the year 2021.

Nr. crt.	Location	Date	Nr. ex.	Observers
1	Vadu	07.05.2021	2	Popovici Floarea, Popovici C.-I.
2	Vadu	09.05.2021	2	Nicolau P.
3	Vadu	3-11.06.2021	2	Mach J., Balášová Marie, Hajzler J.
4	Techirghiol	11. 05. 2021	1	Gyékény Gertrúd, Daróczy J. Sz.
5	Vadu	16.06.2021	2	Brad G.
6	Vadu	20.06.2021	10	Baciu M., Cotorogea C.
7	Vadu	21.06.2021	2	Cotorogea C.
8	Vadu	27.06.2021	6	Cotorogea C.
9	Vadu	28.06.2021	5	Haraszthy L., Kiss J.B.
10	Vadu	30.06.2021	1	Șuba C.
11	Vadu	04.07.2021	2	Curut Ioana, Petrencu, L. Cotorogea Cornel, Cotorogea Jenica, Popovici Floarea, Popovici C.-I.
12	Vadu	05.07.2021	2	Alexe V., Mihai M.
13	Vadu	09.07.2021	4	Szabó J.
14	Vadu	15. 09. 2021	1	Bertalan L., Brad G., Panaitescu D., Cotorogea C.

As it can be seen, the presence of this lapwing in Dobrogea is delimited almost exclusively in the vicinity of Vadu, but compared to previous observations, the birds moved further to another area because on the island where they were previously concentrated, the plant association changed, with a thick reed rising. The biotope frequented this year is identical to the one presented in previous publications in Romania, the predominant halophilic vegetation being *Salicornia* ssp., with clusters of *Juncus maritimus*, interspersed with small water surfaces and interrupted by strips of larger or narrower *Phragmites* reeds.

The individuals observed personally or from the photos at Rombird all seem to have been adults, with the exception of 09.05.2021, showing a subadult bird (photo by Nicolau P.). During the observations, although the birds were often kept in pairs, based on the behaviour it has not been possible to determine whether they intend to breed or are temporarily stopped in the area. Although from half of the observations in the area only two pairs were visible, the numerical fluctuations suggest the existence of other portions of land, visited alternately and not discovered.



Figure 2. The preferred territory frequented by the White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) in the surroundings of Vadu / Constanța (Romania) locality and some of other species in the same place as: *Anas platyrhynchos*, *Egretta garzetta*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Philomachus pugnax* (Photo: Cotorogea C.)



Figure 3. White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) with its most frequently observed prey, the European mole cricket (*Grylotalpa grylotalpa*) - Photo: Cotorogea C.

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Observations on the repeated occurrence of the target species in greater numbers raise the question on the possibility of the territorial expansion of the White-tailed Lapwing anticipated at the end of the last century (BEZZEL, 1985; GLUTZ et al., 1975; HAGEMEIJER & BLAIR, 1997; HAYMAN et al., 1996).

The tendency of the species to fragment its population into isolated areas mentioned in the literature (GLUTZ et al., 1975) becomes evident in the conditions of Dobrogea. We consider the phenomenon as a pulsation phase of the conquest of the new territories southern species expanding further north, a phenomenon attributed to global warming. Subsequent observations are intended to verify this.

From a legislative point of view, the bird enjoys total protection in Romania (***. 2007).

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