VII. International Conference on the Conservation of the Eastern Imperial Eagle, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2013

VII. Medzinárodná konferencia o ochrane orla kráľovského, Bratislava, Slovensko, 2013

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Abstract: The 7th International Conference on the Conservation of the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) was held on October 2–5, 2013 at the Barónka Hotel in Bratislava, Slovakia, organised by Raptor Protection of Slovakia (RPS) in cooperation with the Czech Society for Ornithology and MME / BirdLife Hungary, under the auspices of the Ministry for Environment of the Slovak Republic, supported by the International Visegrad Fund. Results of research by 43 experts from ten countries, including three countries of the Visegrad region – Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary – were presented in 20 lectures and five posters. The conference featured several accompanying events, such as an excursion to imperial eagle breeding sites in the surroundings of the conference venue, a demonstration of work by a dog specially trained in Hungary for seeking poisoned bait and birds, and an exhibition of drawings and paintings by children from the Visegrad region focusing on birds of prey. During the conference a workshop was held to start the process of updating the present International Action Plan for the species from 1996. Furthermore, the action plan for improving the conservation status of populations of the eastern imperial eagle in the Visegrad countries was agreed by the experts from those countries.

Abstrakt: V dňoch 2–5. októbra 2013 sa na Slovensku konala 7. medzinárodná konferencia zameraná na ochranu orla kráľovského (*Aquila heliaca*), v priestoroch hotela Barónka v Bratislave, ktorá bola organizovaná Ochranou dravcov na Slovensku (Raptor Protection of Slovakia – RPS) v spolupráci s Českou ornitologickou spoločnosťou a Maďarskou spoločnosťou pre ornitológiu a ochranu prírody / BirdLife, pod záštitou Ministerstva životného prostredia SR a s podporou Medzinárodného vyšehradského fondu. Výsledky 43 expertov z 10 krajín, zahŕňajúc aj tri krajiny Vyšehradského regiónu – Slovensko, Českú republiku a Maďarskú republiku, boli prezentované formou 20 prednášok a piatich posterov. V priebehu konferencie sa realizovalo niekoľko sprievodných akcií ako exkurzia na hniezdiská orlov kráľovských v okolí miesta konferencie, demonštrácia činnosti špeciálne cvičeného psa na vyhľadávanie otrávených návnad a vtákov, výstava malieb a kresieb detí z krajín Vyšehradského regiónu, zameraných na dravé vtáky. Počas konferencie prebiehal tiež workshop, zameraný na iniciovanie procesu aktualizácie súčasného medzinárodného akčného plánu pre orla kráľovského z roku 1996. Ďalej bol expertmi z Vyšehradského regiónu odsúhlasený akčný plán na podporu ochrany populácie orla kráľovského v krajinách V4.

Key words: conservation status, population status, population trend, International Action Plan, International Visegrad Fund, Visegrad region, threats, poisoning, illegal shooting, electric companies, powerlines, insulation.

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The preparation of the 7th International Conference on the Conservation of the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) started in September 2012 and the event itself was held on October 2–5, 2013 in Slovakia at the Barónka Hotel in Bratislava, with participation of 43 experts from ten countries, including three countries of the Visegrad region – Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary. As the title of the conference suggests, this event was focused on the eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila*

heliaca), which is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2014), because the global population of *A. heliaca* is likely to undergo continuing decline, primarily as a result of habitat loss and degradation, adult mortality through persecution, electrocution and collision with powerlines, nest robbing and prey depletion. To ensure the sustainable conservation of the species and to increase efficiency of conservation measures undertaken for this purpose, cooperation of

experts on the international level is crucial. In pursuit of this goal, an International Eagle Working Group was established in 1990. The first two meetings of the Working Group were held in Budapest in 1990 and 1992 with the participation of Hungarian and Slovak experts. In 1993 the 3rd international conference on the species was organized by BirdLife Hungary (MME) and BirdLife International in Királyrét, Hungary, with 32 participants from eleven European countries. The 4th and 5th international conferences were held in 1998 and in 2003 respectively in Budapest, Hungary (Horváth et al. 2002, Demerdzhiev et al. 2011). The 6th international conference was held in 2008 in Topolovgrad, Bulgaria. During this meeting the representatives of RPS undertook to organize the next conference in Slovakia, and this commitment was gladly met in 2013. Among the 20 lectures and 5 posters presented were papers focusing on population status, trends, distribution, abundance, breeding parameters, threats, and food preferences (Tab. 1). Some papers dealt with the large distance movements of *A. heliaca* studied by satellite telemetry, or with identifying the home range of breeding pairs of *A. heliaca* through radio-tracking, or the dispersal of *A. heliaca* juveniles and immatures. In some cases the authors provided data covering the long period of 9–36 years in order to estimate the turnover rate of breeding individuals, exchange of nests and nesting trees. According to the presented results from Russia and Kazakhstan, the largest population in Europe breeds in this area with 6,401–7,787 nesting pairs estimated in 2013.

Abstracts from presentations (17) were published in the Book of Abstracts (Anonymus 2013). The full texts of six articles and a summary article with twelve submitted abstracts from the conference have been

published in the Slovak Raptor Journal, volume 8 (2014), available on the DeGruyter web site (<http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/srj>, see Tab. 1 also).

During the conference a workshop was held to start the process of updating the present International Action Plan for the species from 1996 (Figs 1, 2). Furthermore, the action plan for improving the conservation status of populations of the eastern imperial eagle in the Visegrad countries was agreed by the experts from those countries. The conference also featured several accompanying events, such as an excursion to imperial eagle breeding sites in the surroundings of the conference venue, a demonstration of work by a dog specially trained in Hungary for seeking poisoned bait and birds (Figs 3, 4), an exhibition of drawings and paintings by children from the Visegrad region (Figs 5–7), and sightseeing in Bratislava city centre.

At the end of the 7th International Conference on the Conservation of the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), participants of the conference adopted the following Resolution:

1. Current population status and trends of *A. heliaca* from the following countries have been presented: Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria, Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Russia and Kazakhstan.

2. Participants welcomed the slightly increasing trend or stabilization of populations in some range countries resulting from systematic implementation of the conservation measures in recent years. Participants noted that the situation is seen to be improving particularly in the countries of the Visegrad region (namely in Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic) and that these countries

Figs 1, 2. First day of the Conference.

Obr. 1, 2. Prvý deň konferencie.

Tab. 1. List of conference presentations and posters on *A. heliaca* biology, population status and trends presented at VII. International Conference on the Conservation of the Eastern Imperial Eagle, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2013

Tab. 1. Prehľad konferenčných príspevkov a posterov z biológie, populačného stavu a trendu *A. heliaca* prezentovaných na VII. Medzinárodnej konferencii o ochrane orla kráľovského, Bratislava, Slovensko, 2013

Presentation title	Slovak Raptor Journal 8(1) 2014 reference
ORAL PRESENTATIONS	
Population status and trends	
Chavko J & Deutschová L: <i>Aquila heliaca</i> in Slovakia	Chavko et al. (2014)
Horváth M: Status of the eastern imperial eagle in Hungary between 2009 and 2013	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Horváth M: Dispersal movements of immature eastern imperial eagles in Hungary	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Horal D: Imperial eagle in the Czech Republic	Horal (2014)
Wichmann G: 15 years of conservation of imperial eagle in Austria	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Deutschová L: Status of the eastern imperial eagle in Visegrad region	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Stojnic N: Imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>) in Serbia	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Lisichanets E: Status of the imperial eagle <i>Aquila heliaca</i> in Macedonia between 2004 and 2013	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Demerdzhiev D: Undertaken conservation measures improving the population status of eastern imperial eagle	Demerdzhiev et al. (2014b)
Demerdzhiev D: Distribution, abundance, breeding parameters, threats and food preferences of eastern imperial eagle in European part of Turkey	Demerdzhiev et al. (2014a)
Horváth M: Population surveys of eastern imperial eagles in Anatolia between 2009 and 2013	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Nikolenko E: Brief study results on the imperial eagle in Russia and Kazakhstan in 2008–2013	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Jerrentrup H: The historic presence of the imperial eagle in Northern Greece	–
Nikolenko E: Eagles in the Altai-Sayan region: distribution, numbers, threats, and trends	–
Fefelov I: Population of imperial eagle in the Baikal region: variability in different areas	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Biology	
Landsfeld B: Estimating turnover rate of breeding eastern imperial eagles by visual identification of individuals	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Stoychev S: Large distance movements of eastern imperial eagle form Bulgaria studied by satellite telemetry	Stoychev et al. (2014)
Nemček V: Telemetry of the juveniles of imperial eagle in West Slovakia	Nemček et al. (2014)
Gradev G: Identifying the home range of breeding pairs of eastern imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca heliaca</i>) through radio-tracking in Bulgaria	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Kovács A: Satellite tracking of juvenile eastern imperial eagles in Hungary between 2003 and 2009	abstract in Deutschová & Guziová (2014)
Bartoszuk K: „ <i>Aquila</i> “ dataloggers, database system, traps and nets	–
POSTERS	
Vili N, Nemesházi E, Kovács S, Horváth M, Kalmár L & Szabó K: Factors affecting DNA quality in feathers used for non-invasive and non-destructive sampling	
Vili N, Horváth M, Kovács S, Chavko J, Szabó K, Hornung E & Kalmár L: Site and mate fidelity in eastern imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>) in the Carpathian Basin based on individual DNA profiles	
Szabó K, Vili N, Kovács S, Papp R, Kövér S, Gyarmati Á & Horváth M: Conservation genetics of the eastern imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>) in Hungary: results of ongoing studies	
Kovács S, Szabó K, Vili N, Horváth M & Kalmár L: Genetic structure, genetic diversity and phylogeography of western populations of the eastern imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca</i>)	
Gradev G, Marin S, Zhelev P & Marinov D: Re-establishment of lesser kestrel (<i>Falco naumanni</i>) in breeding habitats of eastern imperial eagle (<i>Aquila heliaca heliaca</i>) in Bulgaria	
FIELD PRESENTATION	
HELICON project: Presentation of using of a dog for identification of cases of poisoning

Fig. 3. Field presentation of trained dog.

Obr. 3. Predvedenie práce vycvičeného psa v teréne.

Fig. 4. A dog named Falco trained to search poisoned baits.

Obr. 4. Pes menom Falco, vycvičený na hľadanie otrávených návnad

Figs 5. Exhibition of drawings and paintings of children from the Visegrad region.

Obr. 5. Výstava kresieb a malieb detí Vyšehradského regiónu.

may share best practice lessons with other range countries. Participants contend that the *A. heliaca* population of the Visegrad region is important for the conservation of the whole European *A. heliaca* population.

3. Strong anthropic pressure is significantly influencing the distribution and size of the *A. heliaca* population as well as the habitat preferences of the species. Illegal activities (poisoning, shooting, nest robberies) were mentioned as the most serious threats. Mutual cooperation with stakeholders (hunters, pigeon fanciers and others) is crucial to prevent illegal activities as well as the disturbance of feeding and breeding habitats. It is also necessary to undertake other measures to prevent, identify and solve the cases of illegal activities.

4. Cooperation with electricity supply companies is necessary to protect nests on electric pylons (Macedonia) and to prevent electrocution and collisions with power lines. Electrocution appears to remain a serious threat for the species in the whole area of distribution.

5. Systematic monitoring is lacking in some countries or in some parts of particular countries. Based on the data of *A. heliaca* population surveys in Anatolia it can be concluded that this westernmost protrusion of Asia can hold probably the largest eastern imperial eagle population in the world after Russia and Kazakhstan. Systematic monitoring and capacity building should be ensured.

6. Many satellite tagged birds are being killed by electrocution in regions where conservation efforts are lacking (Anatolia). Shooting is also a problem for birds during migration. Conservation measures should be improved in those countries which are important for the species, where such measures are insufficient or absent.

7. Other threats mentioned: habitat degradation and fragmentation, wind farms, road (and possibly further) traffic collisions. Action should be taken to eliminate these threats by participation in strategic and spatial planning and implementation.

8. Satellite and radio telemetry significantly contribute to improving our knowledge about the species and to more effective conservation efforts.

9. The current action plan, Heredia (1996), is based on data from 1993. It is the only action plan that has not been updated for such a long time. The participants agreed on the necessity to update the action plan. The first version of the new draft action plan will be prepared and distributed in 2014. During the conference workshops were held to identify and discuss the threats as well as the reasons for them, and to identify the main

objectives and actions that need to be undertaken. To this end a problem tree was worked out.

10. The conference appreciates and accepts the proposition to hold the 8th international conference on the conservation of the eastern imperial eagle in 2018 in Russia.

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Fig. 6. Winners of the drawing competition Children from Visegrad region are drawing the Eagle. Age Category „Children aged 10“: Patricia Chamrazova, 15 years, Slovakia (left), Zuzana Králikova, 14 years, Slovakia (top right), Oláh Bence, 11 years, Hungary (bottom right).

Obr. 6. Víťazi výtvarnej súťaže Deti z Vyšehradského regiónu kreslia orla. Kategória Deti staršie ako 10 rokov: Patricia Chamrazová, 15 rokov, Slovensko (vľavo), Zuzana Králikova, 14 rokov, Slovensko (vpravo hore), Oláh Bence, 11 rokov, Maďarsko (vpravo dole).

Fig. 7. Winners of the drawing competition Children from Visegrad region are drawing the Eagle. Age Category „Children Up to 10“: Kristína Rothová, 9 years, Slovakia (top), Danko Dekan, 8 years, Slovakia (middle), Csintó Bolond, 9 years, Hungary (bottom).

Obr. 7. Víťazi výtvarnej súťaže Deti z Vyšehradského regiónu kreslia orla. Kategória Deti do 10 rokov: Kristína Rothová, 9 rokov, Slovensko (hore), Danko Dekan, 8 rokov, Slovensko (v strede), Csintó Bolond, 9 rokov, Maďarsko (dole).

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