



*A young white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla), at Cape Kolka on the day of counting migrating birds.
Photo: Ruslans Matrozis*

Spring birding morning at Cape Kolka

In the morning of March 28th 2020, within the framework of Baltic Wings project, Ruslans Matrozis carried out the counting of migrating terrestrial, sea and water birds at Cape Kolka. During five hours (6 am–11 am), 6350 birds of at least 57 species were counted. The weather conditions were favourable – mild wind, sunny, temperature reaching up to + 8 C°.

The migration of terrestrial birds this year in comparison to the inventories of the previous years, in the similar dates at the end of March, was lower, even despite the relatively good meteorological conditions at the time of counting. Presumably, it is related to the warm winter, which prompted the early spring migrants to set off sooner. For example, Common Wood-pigeons (*Columba palumbus*) were migrating in significantly smaller flocks in the counting day: while on 29.03.2019. the average number of birds in the flock was 35 individuals (total count: 1184 birds), on 28.03.2020. – the average number in flock was 14 birds (total count: 422 birds). This year, it is three times less. Eurasian Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*) were also migrating in lesser numbers in comparison to the inventories of the previous years. The migration of other birds migrating *en masse* - thrushes (*Turdus sp.*), finches (*Fringilla sp.*) and corvid birds (*Corvus sp.*) was also

relatively low. This evidences indirectly that the early spring has moved the migration course of these species to an earlier period.

This year, the most interesting observation was the concentration of the Eurasian Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) on the seashore of Cape Kolka, near the fallen pine trees, where up to 40 individuals gathered together. Usually, it is hard to establish the migration course for this species since the local nesting-birds, which actively sing and feed in the dunes, also arrive to the Kolka forests for nesting, and it is not known how many of the observed loner individuals could be migrants. This time the concentration

In March and April the black-throated loons can be seen migrating pass Cape Kolka. Illustration: Peter Nilsson





The winter storms of winter 2019/2020 washed out the pines at Cape Kolka from the side of the Gulf of Riga significantly. The fallen trees remained on the seashore to strengthen the coastline. Atypically large number of Eurasian wrens was observed in this habitat, with birds hunting tiny insects among the roots and trunks of pines. Photo: R.Matrozis

of this species at Cape Kolka was significant. Eurasian Siskins (*Carduelis spinus*) were also migrating in higher numbers – more than 5 000 flying birds. It is possibly related to the fact that more Eurasian siskins survived warm winter in Latvia in comparison to the previous years. Large number of Eurasian siskins at Cape Kolka (4370 individuals) was previously recorded ten years ago (03.04.2010.).

The migration of sea and water birds was relatively passive, in fact only migration of local flocks of birds was observed, which occurred to and from the feeding sites. There was observed a larger number of Velvet Scoters (*Melanitta fusca*), which were flying in small flocks (up to 32 individuals) mainly to the Northern direction.



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