

Breeding population of the White Stork in Albania in 2007

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Zusammenfassung

Im Juli 2007 wurden alle potentiellen Weißstorchlebensräume in Albanien aufgesucht. Es konnten insgesamt 3 Paare (HPa) mit insgesamt 13 Jungen registriert werden. Alle Brutplätze befanden sich im Süden des Landes. Es handelt sich hier vielleicht um die letzten Weißstorchbrutplätze in Albanien. Die nächsten rezenten Brutvorkommen liegen 30 km SSE entfernt im Thiamis-Delta in Ípiros / Griechenland. Die Weißstorchlebensräume in Albanien sind durch wasserbauliche Maßnahmen und landwirtschaftliche Übernutzung so stark gestört worden, dass aus heutiger Sicht mit einer intakten Weißstorchbrutpopulation am Rand des südost-europäischen Verbreitungsgebietes nicht mehr gerechnet werden kann.

Summary

In July 2007, visits were made to all potential habitats of the White Stork in Albania. A total of 3 breeding pairs with about 13 juveniles could be found in the south of the country. The area of Butrintit-Pavlës / Sarandrës may be the last White Stork breeding ground in Albania. The habitats of the White Stork in Albania are so highly disturbed by drainage activities and agricultural intensification, that it seems inconceivable that the country can now support a stable population of White Storks at the south-eastern edge of its European range.

Methods

In July 2007, visits were made to all potential habitats of the White Stork in Albania. "The Selected Sites Visited" (PEJA & BEGO 1995) was a very valuable help. Sites listed in "Records of White Stork breeding during the last few years" (PEJA & BEGO 1999) were checked, especially the landscape around two confirmed breeding sites from 1995 in the area of Rëthi Lezhës and Lushnjës.

Advice from H. GRUBER for Korçës, B. HALLMANN for Mucijas and Remasi / Lushnjës, Ballshi / Fierit, on Doftisë-Lake at Libohova / Gjirokastrës, Kraneja / Sarandrës and from B. STUMBERGER for the Bojana-Buna Delta / Shkodër was carefully followed.

Results

In the Montenegrin part of the lowland Bojana-Buna Delta and Skutarilake, as well as close to the border on Ohridlake in Macedonia, no White Stork breeding sites were found. The White Stork has abandoned all breeding sites in Montenegro (see REISER & FÜHRER 1896). PELLE (1989) identifies the Balkan Peninsula, from the Adriatic coast of southern Albania to the Alps, 250 km across and 130,000 km² in area, as a landscape from which the White Stork is absent.

Two breeding pairs (HPm 2 and HPm 4) were found in 2007 in Greece, less than 10 km from the border, on the little Prespa lake, and others in the Thiamis delta northwest from Igoumenítsa. During the International White Stork Census 2004, one breeding pair (HPm 1) was recorded in Mazi, at 448 m above sea level (40°02'23" N 20°40'04" E), Ioánina, in the water catchment area of Vjosës/Aóos (per H. HECKENROTH). Downstream as far as the estuary at the Adriatic Sea in Albania no other breeding sites were detected. In 2007 White Stork breeding sites were confirmed only in the water catchment area of Butrintit-Pavlës / Sarandrës.

Mesopotam (close to Kraneja and Finigi): In 1996 there was an empty nest on a walnut tree close to a residential house. It had been occupied by a nesting pair as recently as the early 1990s, according to local residents (per H. HECKENROTH).

Kraneja: Here was a report of a nest from a shepherd in August 2005 (B. HALLMANN). No nest was found. The location and surrounding area do not appear to be suitable for breeding White Storks.

Finigi: A report of a nest by a resident of Buronjë was followed up. A breeding site could not be found.

North Vrión: Breeding pair with 3 young (7 weeks old on July 7th 2007) on a 9 m high stump of a poplar tree (39°52'51,6" N 20°03'09,4" E), 63 m above sea level (Figure 1).

South Vrión: Breeding pair with 6 young (7 weeks old on July 7th 2007) on a single standing steeple (39°52'51,4" N 20°03'09,9" E), 68 m above sea level.

Cukë: Breeding pair with 4 young (7 ½ weeks old on July 7th 2007) on a steeple (39°50'27,4" N 20°02'13,9" E), 60 m above sea level.



Discussion

The area of Butrintit-Pavlës / Sarandrës may be the last White Stork breeding ground in Albania. The nearest recent breeding occurrences are 30 km to the SSE, in the Thiamis-Delta in Ípiros / Greece (H. HECKENROTH). There is no other connection to breeding populations in neighbouring countries (REISER & FÜHRER 1896, JOVETICS 1959 and 1960, HECKENROTH 1969, PELLE 1989, STUMBERGER & VELEVSKI 2002).

NOWAK (1980) has previously reported the drainage of shallow lakes in Albania. Drainage activities, and their associated negative effects on White Stork habitats, have continued in many parts of Albania until the present. Large-scale agricultural irrigation is still widespread. Intensive use of pesticides for agriculture and forestry has continued for a long time and negative effects are noticeable on fauna, especially on White Stork prey. Sample analysis by the authors in the surveyed habitats shows that available food resources for the White Stork are inadequate.

The habitats of the White Stork in Albania are so highly disturbed by drainage activities and agricultural intensification, that it seems inconceivable that the country can now support a stable population of White Storks at the south-eastern edge of its European range. Bird communities are extremely impoverished throughout Albania, with no change noticeable until the borders with neighbouring countries.

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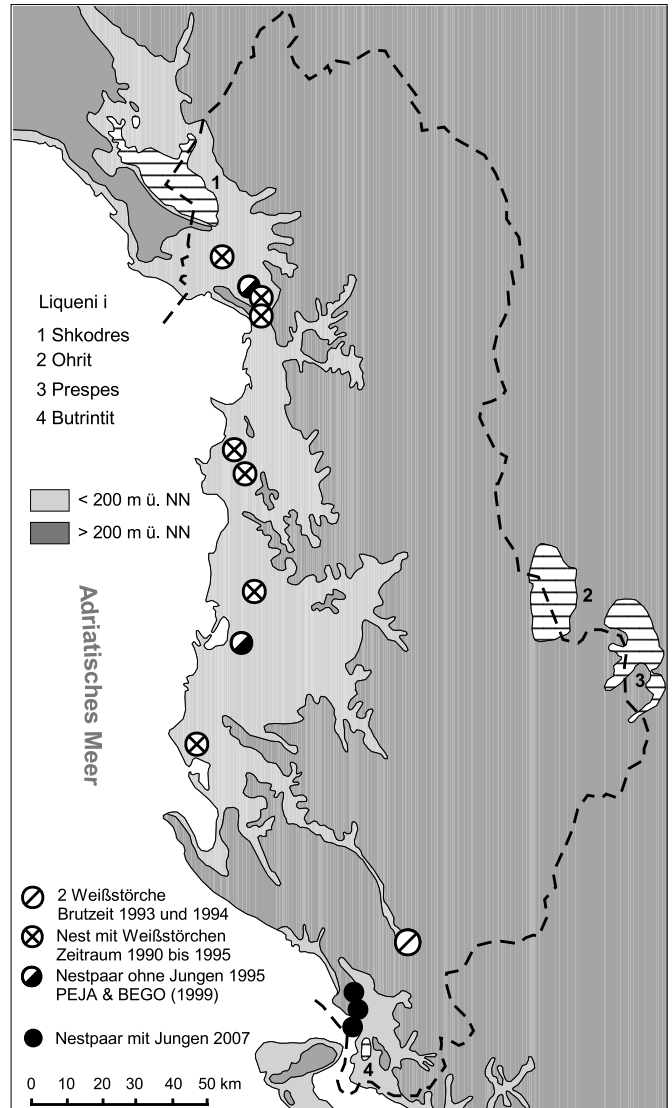


Fig. 1. Historical and recent distribution of the White Stork in Albania. Historische und derzeitige Verbreitung des Weißstorchs in Albanien.

Tab. 1. Population of the White Stork in Albania 2007. Population des Weißstorchs in Albanien 2007.

	HPa	HPm	HPo	HE	JZG	JZa.	JZm
2007	3	3	-	-	13	4,33	4,33

