

## Book review



### Breeding Bird Atlas of Ukraine

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In November 2022 the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds published the Ukrainian Breeding Bird Atlas. The book, in large format and with beautiful images of the Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus* by V. Kaistro on the cover, opens with a map of Ukraine which highlights how the vast territory (603,628 km<sup>2</sup>) can be schematically divided into six physical-geographical zones. The south-western part, bordering Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, is occupied by the Carpathian Mountains which reach a maximum height of 2,061 meters with Mount Hoverla. Broad-leaved forests prevail in this area (6% of the national surface), and this same type of vegetation characterizes the flat area to the east of the Carpathians (10% of the territory). The northern strip of the country (15% of the area) is occupied by mixed forests (coniferous and deciduous), further south there is the forest-steppe zone (27%), and in the southernmost part there is the steppe (40%). The remaining 1% of the territory is occupied by the Crimean Mountains (maximum height 1,545 m) which run parallel to the south-eastern coast of the homonymous peninsula for about 150 km.

The book is dedicated to Igor Gorban (8 April 1960 - 12 September 2017), Ukrainian zoologist, ornithologist, senior researcher at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, and national coordinator for Ukraine of the first and second Atlas of breeding birds of Europe. Throughout his life Igor Gorban worked to bring Ukrainian ornithology to a European level, and to do this he strongly stimulated the collaboration between professional and amateur ornithologists to be able to face even demanding projects.

The Ukrainian Breeding Bird Atlas has included both the data collected as part of the Second Atlas of European Breeding Birds project promoted by the European Bird Census Council in the period from 2013-2017 with further additions relating to the years 2018-2020. The initiative was supported financially by the MAVA Foundation, and the book was also printed thanks to private donations from members of the Czech Society for Ornithology (BirdLife Partner in Czechia) and by the Swiss Ornithological Institute.

The territory of Ukraine was divided into 281 squares of 50 x 50 km, and 94 ornithologists contributed to the field data collection. Additional information on the distri-

bution, status, and abundance of individual species was provided by 31 other people. In the first instance, all squares in which the presence of at least 75% of the potentially nesting species in the region were ascertained and were considered validly surveyed. Squares with less than 7 nesting species were automatically considered not registered. For the squares where critical issues were found, further research was carried out in order to be able to provide valid coverage of the entire territory.

In the survey period (2013-2020), 275 nesting species were recorded in Ukraine, of which 157 were non-passerines and 118 were passerines (non-passerines/passerines = 1.33). In the text, the species have been listed following the order of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (2018) jointly edited by HBW and BirdLife International. Reference was also made to the same text for the scientific nomenclature (completely) and for names in English (with some exceptions). For the Ukrainian names of the species, those suggested by Fesenko G.V. and Bokoteya A.A. in *Анотований список українських наукових назв птахів фауни України* (An annotated list of Ukrainian scientific names of birds of the fauna of Ukraine) (2007) were adopted.

A page of the Atlas has been reserved for each nesting species accompanied by beautiful black and white drawings by Mykola Veselskyi. For each species, the following is reported: order and family, Ukrainian name, scientific name, and English name. Below is a large map (12 x 17 cm) in which the borders of the regions are visible in light grey and the courses of the main rivers in blue. On it are coloured circles which, for each 50 x 50 km square, express the nesting category (possible, probable, certain) with the filling colour (different shades of blue) and the size through six different abundance classes (1-9 pairs, 10-99 pairs, 100-999 pairs, 1,000-9,999 pairs, 10,000-99,999 pairs, > 100,000 pairs). The text, exclusively in Ukrainian, is divided into two parts: the first part describes the distribution of the species in Europe, with comments on specific conditions that have determined its presence (for example, releases for hunting purposes), while the second part specifically describes the environments frequented in Ukraine with particular detail for those used for nesting.

Although with different levels of abundance and nesting category, the examination of the maps show that the following species are widespread throughout the territory of Ukraine: Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Rock Dove *Columba livia*, Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Northern Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*, Common Raven *Corvus corax*, Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, Common Linnet *Linaria cannabi-*

*na*, and European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*. However, some species are very scarce and localized. This is the case of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* found only in two squares in the western part of the territory and of the Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* present only in the extreme eastern part. Very localized species in the northern part of Ukraine are Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Azure Tit *Cyanistes Cyanus*, Blyth's Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, and Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*. Many of the rarest species are concentrated in the southern part of the country. In particular, the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* is reported only in the district of Reni (Odesa Oblast) and in the Novoazovsk district (Donetsk Oblast); the Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* has been detected in the Hola Prystan district (Kherson Oblast) and in the north-western part of Crimea; the Lesser Short-toed Lark *Alaudala rufescens* is sparsely (and uncertainly) present near the Black Sea. Some species are present exclusively in the Crimean Peninsula: Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*, Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*, and Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*.

The book ends with the bibliography, the summary, and the indexes of the names of the species in the different languages used. Inside the back cover there is a map of Ukraine in which, for each 50 x 50 km square, the number of species detected is indicated (regardless of the level of nesting category). The four squares with the highest number of species (169-173) are located in the north-western part of the country (Volyn and Rivne regions). The species are relatively numerous also along the Dnieper river north of Kyiv (162 species) and in the extreme north-eastern edge along the Desna river, straddling the Chernihiv and Sumy regions (165 species). All these squares are included in the mixed forest belt. The physical-geographical zone that presents the greatest number of squares with rather high abundances (160-169 species) is the Carpathian one, in the area close to the basins of the Stryi and Dnister rivers. In the areas occupied by forest-steppe and steppe, the only two squares with over 160 species coincide with the large Pechenihy Reservoir (Kharkiv Oblast). Overall, a progressive decrease in species can be seen going from the north-west to the south-east.

The book, simple in form but complete in content, has the extraordinary merit of providing, for the first time at a country scale, an accurate distribution maps of all breeding bird species in Ukraine. The volume can be purchased by contacting Tanya Zhuriy (Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds) at [communication@birdlife.org.ua](mailto:communication@birdlife.org.ua).

I am grateful to Kelsey Horvath for revising the English text.