

Water birds of the Lagoon in the Egion Area - N. Peloponnese, Greece

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Introduction

This report contains data concerning the status of water birds which were observed during 1989 in the lagoon area of "Aliki", Egion region, in the Northern Peloponnese. The lagoon has been protected by the local community since 1978 and belongs to one of the important bird areas in the European Community. There is a little information about the avifauna of this area and especially about the water birds which use the lagoon for breeding, as a stepping stone during the migration and as a preferred biotope for wintering. These were the main reasons which led us to study this wetland.

Site description - Methods - Climatic conditions.

The lagoon is situated almost in the centre of the Northern Peloponnese, 3 km east of the town of Egion. It is a small shallow lagoon with a surface of 18 Ha. The reed beds, helophytes, rushes and tamarisks constitute the flora of the lagoon and of the tidal zone, while orchards, olive groves and vineyards dominate in the cultural zone. We visited the lagoon from January - December 1989, on a monthly basis, 2-4 days at a time, while during April and September we visited the area twice a month. Simple 2 km transect lines were walked which passed through all the particular types of habitat within the area. The exceptionally dry conditions during 1989 in this region, were unfavourable to the water birds and had negative effects both upon the number of bird species and the number of populations which stayed in the area in order to breed.

Results and Discussion

Concerning seasonal occurrence of avifauna we observed 54 water birds in total. (Table 1). Eight of them are residents and occur all the year round. The rest are classified as follows: 23 sp. are passage migrants, of which 12 sp. of Charadriiformes stayed in the area during the summer in small numbers but did not nest; 7 sp. are summer visitors which came during spring; 12 sp. are winter visitors and 6 sp. are irregular visitors which can not be classified within any of the above categories because of insufficient data. In addition 33 bird sp. which have been recorded by scattered observations from Hellenic Ornithological Society in the past were not observed by us. Among the residents, the most numerous were the Herring Gulls, Coots and Mallards, while the most numerous of the breeding summer visitors were the Little Ringed Plovers.

Concerning the pattern of seasonal occurrence, during April we have a peak of 27 bird sp. attributable to spring migration which started during the second week of March and continued until mid-June. This is not a rare pattern when exceptionally dry conditions dominate in winter and spring. Most of the bird species and the largest numbers of individuals passed through during March and April. A second peak of 29 bird species which were recorded in August is attributable on the one hand to some autumn migrants as the autumn passage has started and on the other hand to the summer visitors which have not yet begun their migration. Between mid-September and mid-October is a poor time in terms of bird sp. as most of the winter visitors have not arrived yet and most of the migrants and summer visitors have departed. February is the poorest month for the opposite reasons. Pintails, Teals and Pochards were the most numerous of the winter visitors.

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