

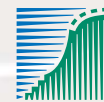
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Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,
management and research of the
world's waterbird flyways

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The sixth International White Stork Census: 2004-2005

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The decline of the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* population early in the 20th century has often been used to highlight problems in the environment, notably the loss of wetlands and the changes in agriculture. This paper presents population trends since 1994/95 and first results of the sixth International White Stork Census.

White Storks have been intensively studied in the past: since 1934 there have been five international censuses (1934, 1958, 1974, 1984, 1994/95). The next international census in 2004-05 is to be co-ordinated again by the German Society for Nature Conservation (NABU, the BirdLife Partner in Germany) and the

Michael-Otto-Institute. The Sixth International White Stork Census is a project of BirdLife International, and it is supported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (BirdLife Partner in Great Britain). Altogether, 40 countries in Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia will take part in the project. The White Stork will be used as a flagship species for public awareness campaigns by several national BirdLife partner organisations.

The International White Stork Census is taking place in 2004 and 2005. In each country a national coordinator or organ-



Fig. 1. Population trends of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* populations between 1984 and 1995/96 (Schulz 1999).

Table 1. Population trends since 1995/96 in some regions (names of White Stork subpopulations after Schulz 1999).

Country	Coverage	Year	Population size	Source	Population change (%)
Eastern core population					
Austria	Total country	2002	366	BirdLife Austria (in litt.)	+4,6
Czech Republic	Total country	2003	811	Rejmann 2004	-4,9
Slovakia	Total country	2003	1 250	Fulin 2003	+10,9
Latvia	Estimate	1999		Janaus 2001	Increase
Poland	Obra Valley, Western Poland	2000	43	Tryjanowski & Kuzniak 2002	-27,1
Hungary	Total country	1999	5 500	Lovaszi 2001	+13,4
Romania	Projection	1999	4 400	Kósa 2001	-12,0
Belarus	Projection	1999	11 500	Samusenko 2000	-2,5
Ukraine	Estimate	2003	25 000-30 000	Grishchenko 2004	≥42,9
North western peripheral population					
Denmark	Total country	2003	1	Skov in litt.	-83,3
Germany	Total country	2003	4 162	NABU-BAG Weißstorchschutz 2004	+2,4
The Netherlands	Total country	1998	326	van der Have (in litt.)	+22,6
Switzerland	Total country	2003	191	Storch Schweiz 2004	+14,4
South eastern peripheral population					
Serbia and Montenegro	Vojvodina	1999	998	Gergelij <i>et al.</i> , 2000	+23,2
South western core population					
France	Charente-Maritime	1998	70	Sériot <i>et al.</i> , 1998	+62,8
Maghreb population					
Tunisia	Total country	1999	405	Azafzaf 2002	+15,7
Algeria	Total country	2001	5 147	Moali (in litt.)	+92,1

Table 2. Preliminary results of the Sixth International White Stork Census from some participating countries.

Country	1994/95	2004	National co-ordinator
Western Core Population			
Portugal	3 302	7 630	SPEA, G. Rosa, V. Encarnacao, M. Candelária
France	315	941	Groupe Cigogne France, Aprezial, G. Wey
North western peripheral population			
Belgium	?	50	BirdLife Belgium, W. van den Bosche
Denmark	6	3	DOF, H. Skov
Germany	4 063	4 710	NABU, C. Kaatz
Sweden	11	29	O. Olson
Switzerland	167	198	Storch Schweiz, M. & P. Enggist
The Netherlands	266	528	Vogelbescherming Nederland, R. Rietfeld
Eastern core population			
Austria	350	392	BirdLife Austria, E. Karner-Ranner
Slovakia	1 127	1 330	SOVS, M. Fulin
Slovenia	?	236	DOPPS, D. Denac
Hungary	4 850	5 300	MME, P. Lovászi
South eastern peripheral population			
Greece	1 500	2 139	T. Kominos

isation (national BirdLife partners) is responsible for the collection and analysis of data. Where possible the census will cover the total area of the country.

Twenty-four countries participated in the fourth International White Stork Census. This census documented the all time low of the population and revealed a world population size of no more than 135 000 breeding pairs (Rheinwald 1989,

Schulz 1999). Over ten years since the previous census the decline in the western population (20%) was much greater than in the eastern population (10%) (Rheinwald 1989).

Ten years later the fifth International Census documented a population increase of 23%, and the new population estimate was 166 000 pairs (Schulz 1999). White Stork populations had increased in nearly all countries and regions, except Denmark,

Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania and perhaps Turkey (Fig. 1). The western population has increased by about 75% since 1984 whereas the eastern population has increased by only 15%.

There are different reasons for the population increase between 1984 and 1994/95. The strong increase of the western population is attributed to better climatic conditions in the wintering areas in the western Sahel and the development of a wintering population in southern Spain (Tortosa *et al.* 1995). On the Iberian peninsula the increase in the number of irrigated fields and the attractiveness of large garbage dumps for storks may have improved feeding conditions for breeding storks (Schulz 1999).

The reasons for the smaller increase in the eastern population are not clear. The economic difficulties in central and eastern Europe after 1990 and their influence on the intensity of farming possibly had a positive effect on the reproductive success of White Storks.

Since the last (fifth) international census White Stork populations have changed in different ways. In south-western Europe and in the Maghreb region numbers of Storks have increased rapidly. In western central Europe there has been an increase until 2000 and a slight decrease thereafter (Table 1). In most countries the numbers of White Stork are nowadays higher than in 1994/95.

We have received preliminary results of the Sixth International Census from eleven countries (Table 2). In most of them populations of White Storks have increased since the previous census. The largest increases in population size were recorded in those regions inhabited by storks migrating on the western flyway. Here the numbers went up by more than 100%. Populations also increased, however, in the regions hosting storks that migrate on the eastern flyway.

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White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in the Turkish region of Uluabat Lake. These birds have always had a long association with houses and other man-made structures. Photo: Kai-Michael Thomsen.