

**Memorandum of Understanding
on the Conservation and Management of the Middle-European Population
of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)**

**NATIONAL REPORT
(by 2004)**

Ukraine

Compiled by: Volodymyr Domashlinets, Wildlife Protection Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine (domashlinets@menr.gov.ua), CMS Focal Point
Yuriy Andriushchenko, Azov-Black Sea Ornithological Station, Research Institute of biodiversity of land and water ecosystem of Ukraine, Melitopol' (station@melitopol.net)

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1. Habitat protection

1.1. Designation of protected areas

The Great Bustard is protected in the Black Sea Biosphere reserve. No specific protected areas for the bird have been designated in Ukraine so far.

1.1.1. Current state of the Great Bustard population in Ukraine

The Great Bustard is irregularly distributed in Ukraine. Individual nesting populations can occur in the most part of the territory, however, considerable portion of the birds is in Crimea. The most valuable settlements of the Great Bustard are located in Kerch peninsula, where the species is relatively common. Also, the bird can be met in north-western part of the Crimea and in near-Sivash area. There are no records on the Great Bustard occurrence in the western Ukrainian region (oblast¹) (Volyn', L'viv, Ternopil', Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmel'nitsk and Chernivtsi regions) as well as in the right-bank part of the Central Ukraine (Vinnitsa, Kirovograd and Cherkasy regions).

The numbers of the Great Bustard in the Steppe zone of the left-bank Ukraine in breeding season are 570–750 individuals from which 150–200 females nest annually. During the breeding season the species is most abundant in the Kerch peninsula: there density is 0.4–0.6

¹ Oblast is administrative territorial unit in Ukraine.

individuals/km² for nesting birds and 1.4–1.8 individuals/km² for all birds in the north of the area. The numbers of birds in the remained part of Ukraine are approx. 70–100 individuals (Tsitsura V. K., 1995). Thus, according to preliminarily data, the numbers of the Great Bustard during nesting period are ca. 640–850 individuals from which 200–250 females nest annually.

The birds winter in the southern parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, more rare in the northern part and in the most part of the Steppe Crimea. It is possible that the birds winter in Odesa, Mykolaiv and Donetsk regions. The numbers of the wintering birds depend on the weather conditions during individual winter. When the weather conditions are typical, there are 11,000–12,000 individuals in the wintering places from which more than 80% is in the south of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and in Crimea – about 15%.

1.2. Measures taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats outside of protected areas

The Great Bustard is listed in the Red Data Book of Ukraine, therefore, according to the Ukrainian legislation, it should be protected throughout its range regardless the conservation status of the territory.

1.3. Measures taken to avoid fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats

The Law on the State Programme on Building of the National Ecological Network for the period 2001–2015 is adopted in Ukraine. The Programme *inter alia* addresses the problem of the habitat fragmentation including that for the Great Bustard.

1.4. Legal measures

The Great Bustard is listed in the Red Data Book of Ukraine thus is protected according to the Law on the Red Data Book of Ukraine. Ukraine is a Party to CITES, Bonn and Bern Conventions in appendices of which the species is included. Ukraine is a Signatory to the Great Bustard MoU. In 2001 the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources has approved the Interregional Programme for the Conservation of Steppe and restoration of the Eastern European Population of the Great Bustard, the main implementing agency of which is “Fauna” Ecoagrofirm (Kharkiv oblast).

2. Prevention of hunting, disturbance and threats

2.1. Hunting

According to the Law of Ukraine on the Red Data Book, hunting for any species listed in the Red Data Book including the Great Bustard is not allowed except for special cases subject to individual permits.

2.2. Prevention of disturbance

The disturbance is considered to be critical threat for the species in Ukraine and a number of measures should be undertaken to address the issue.

2.3.1 Prevention of predation

Such species as *Pica pica*, *Corvus frugilegus*, *Corvus cornix*, *Corvus corax*, fox *Canis vulpus*, feral dogs (*C. familiaris*), and *Nyctereutes procyonoides* are considered to be harmful/

predator species for the Great Bustard. According to Ukrainian hunting legislation, the numbers of feral domestic dogs, *Pica pica*, *Corvus frugilegus*, *Corvus cornix* could be regulated thus diminishing their threat to the birds.

2.3.2 Adoption of measures for power lines

No casualties of Great Bustards from electrocution are known in Ukraine; however, power lines are recognised as a threat to the species.

2.3.3 Compensatory measures

No such measures have been taken so far.

3. Possession and trade

Being a Red Data Book species, the Great Bustard in Ukraine is strictly protected under the Law on Animal Kingdom (2001) and Law on the Red Data Book of Ukraine (2002). As such it is prohibited to take and/or possess eggs (except for special cases like taking eggs for the purposes of artificial breeding under special permits), dead or alive birds of any age, as well as stuffed specimens (unless registered under special conditions for collections of stuffed animals) without proper permits issued by the competent authority.

4. Recovery measures

4.1. Captive breeding in emergency situations

There are on-going activities of the “Fauna” Agroecofirm on rearing of the Great Bustards in captivity from the eggs taken from the wild (originated legally mostly from the Russian Federation). The firm has proper facilities for keeping birds in captivity.

4.2. Reintroduction.

No attempts have been done so far, however, this is one of the target of the activity of the “Fauna” Agroecofirm.

4.3. Monitoring of the success of release programmes.

No releases have taken place so far.

5. Cross-border conservation measure

There is a regional cooperation with the Russian Federation concerning exchange of experience in captive breeding of the Great Bustard. The Azov-Black Sea Ornithological Station collaborates with experts in Germany (Forderverein Großtrappenschutz (FGS)).

6. Monitoring and research

6.1.1 Monitoring of population size and population trends

Monitoring of the birds is conducted mostly by the Azov-Black Sea Ornithological Station.

6.1.2 Monitoring of the effects of habitat management

No such management, respectively monitoring, have taken place so far.

6.2.1 Comparative ecological studies

No such studies have been carried out.

6.2.2 Promotion of studies on mortality factors

Illegal hunting and such farming activities as mechanical harvest, mowing, cattle pasturing were recognised as the threats that can cause the birds mortality.

6.2.3 Investigation of factors limiting breeding success

Azov-Black Sea Ornithological Station carried out investigation of factors limiting breeding success.

6.2.4 Studies on migration

No such studies have been carried out.

7. Training of staff working in conservation bodies

No such training has taken place so far.

8. Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustards and their habitat

There are hard and web-based publications of the Red Data Book of Ukraine into which the Great Bustard is included. Several individual publications and post cards devoted to the Red Data Book were issued.

9. Economic measures

None have been taken so far.

10. Threats

The following threats to the Great Bustard were identified:

1. Loss and change of biotopes:

– afforestation of open fields (artificial forests, hedgerows, gardens, vineyards).

Estimation of threat: low.

– expansion of the area used for construction and building and associated modified lands (settlements, industrial, agricultural and military objects).

Estimation of threat: low.

– cropping focusing on plants not suitable for the Great Bustard nesting (e.g. rice, crops requiring frequent tillage etc.).

Estimation of threat: middle – potentially high.

– overgrazing in the nesting areas

Estimation of threat: low – potentially high.

2. Hunting, chasing of birds, collection of eggs and nestlings.

Estimation of threat: high.

3. Human caused disturbance of birds especially during mowing resulted in changing of nocturnal rhythm of the birds, disrupting of social relation between them and mortality of abandoned eggs and nestlings.

Estimation of threat: critical.

4. Chemical pollution of the environment (poisoning by pesticides).

Estimation of threat: potentially high.

5. Bird mortality caused by power lines.

Estimation of threat: middle.

6. Introduction and/or increasing of the numbers of predators: Corvidae (*Pica pica*, *Corvus frugilegus*, *Corvus cornix*, *Corvus corax*), fox (*Canis vulpus*), domestic dog (*C. familiaris*), Raccoon Dog (*Nyctereutes procyonoides*).

Estimation of threat: high – critical.

7. Trade in and exchange of birds and eggs.

Estimation of threat: middle – high

8. Negative impact of agricultural activity:

– mortality of eggs and nestlings caused by agricultural machines.

Estimation of threat: high.

– mortality of eggs and nestlings caused by grazing (trampling down by cattle, consuming by shepherd's dogs).

Estimation of threat: middle.

– bird disturbance (scaring) (especially if a lot of peoples and machinery involved simultaneously).

Estimation of threat: middle – high.

9. Highly fragmented, mosaic range and small numbers of the Great Bustard population (obstacles in free exchanging of genetic information, accumulation of negative consequences of inbreeding).

Estimation of threat: critical.

10. Characteristics of the species biology:

– late maturity (females –3–4 years old, males – 5–6 years old);

– low fertility (mostly one egg laying per year, 1–3 eggs per laying);

– high caution of the birds (brooding bird allows a man to come near; being alarmed the bird not available near the nest for a long time thus increasing threat for the nest to be destroyed).

References:

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