

## A brief report about protection of Great Bustard in Serbia and Montenegro

**Boris Garovnikov**

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The Great Bustard is constantly in Vojvodina in the area north of rives Sava and Danube. The first historical data on nesting (the description and a drawing of a nest) was recorded three centuries age (Marsili 1726). The Great Bustard regularly nested on several localities up to the beginning of the 20th Century, but since the it started rapidly declining in numbers. Nowadays it nests only in a limited area in the north of Banat, near Mokrin. During the breeding period a total of 35 individuals are observed on average, whereas their numbers in winter can exceed 40 inds.

The most important part of this vast area was designated in 1997 as Special Nature Reserve "The Pastures of The Great Bustard", and it covers 980 ha of the entire area.

Prior to the Second World War, the Great Bustard was considered as game bird on our territory, therefore the data on its occurrence and shootings can primarily be found in hunting literature. The hunting pressure was strongest in Banat, the greatest number of shootings relates to Mokrin, Novo Miloševo and the northern Banat. This data undoubtedly indicate that the northern Banat supported numerous breeding and wintering population of the Great Bustard, especially during the period between the two World Wars.

There are two laws that protect Great Bustard.

Firstly, it is protected by The law about protection of living environment. This way, the republic of Serbia put it in the very top of protected species, under the first grade of protection.

Secondly, the Great Bustard is permanently protected, by the Low about hunt.

1.

The first measures were taken in the late seventies.

Firstly, people were educated about significance of Great Bustards, biology of this specie, and, of course, importance of its protection. The whole net of volunteers was formed (usually students, farmers and hunters) to supervise the area. To the protected zone were introduced informal passive and active measures of protection, with intention of choosing best ones.

In the early nineties, experts started working on "Stručne/Dokumentacione osnove za izradu Predloga za zaštitu prirodnog dobra >Pašnjaci velike droplje< kao Specijalnog rezervata prirode", which was finished in 1996. These documents were necessary for pronouncing this area protected. This documentation contains: location of considered area, borders, surface, natural characteristics, human factor, estimation of treatment of the area, general concept of protection, development, organization and management.

According to " Stručna/Dokumentaciona osnova ", our government declared this area protected on 31st of July 1997. Size of the area is 979 ha.

Furthermore, these Regulations instigate what is forbidden, and what is necessary for upgrading the state of Great Bustard. For example, it is forbidden to bring \_\_\_\_\_ species in, do the reclaiming, building power lines, afforestation, making dumps or any other kind of disposals, etc.

Sometimes, it is permitted to mow, hunt, grow groceries, and bring tourists... to some parts of the area. In Reservation, it is obligation to follow the states and the changes of the ecosystem. Of course, leaving food during winter is, beside mortification of predators, one of the most important measures.

Firstly, it was discussed about forming a protective ring around this area, where Great Bustard used to live in the past, or wonder during winter. Later, this idea was withdrawn because the Great Bustard became permanently protected in the whole country. In the whole area around protected zone, are volunteers who overlook the movements of the birds, and eventual breeding, during the whole year.

In the nearest future, there are no plans made for proceeding, that can intrude protected zone, or its surrounding, where the Great Bustard might occurred.

2.

2.1.

As it is already mentioned, the specie of Great Bustard is protected in the whole republic of Serbia. It is not permissive to hunt it, catch, disrupt, keep imprisoned, stuff, and also sell remedies made out of it.

2.2.

Potentially, higher disturbance, might be realized in case of pasture (when cattle trample over the eggs). Grass is mowed only once a year. Only cereals are grown (insecticides or any kind of toxic material is forbidden). There are no roads with active transport across protected area. Settlements are distant. Hunting rabbits and pheasants is permitted only after the October the first, for two hunting days. Period of time between hunting days is usually not less than two weeks. Tourism considers only observing the surrounding area from the established watchtowers.

2.3.1.

The main predator is the fox. Number of foxes is constantly under supervision, and is regulated with bag.

2.3.2.

The power lines are on the very edge of the zone under protection. They are connecting settlements. So, there are no power lines across these territories, and it is even forbidden establishing new ones.

3.

Every kind of possessing, collecting or trading these remarkable birds or their eggs is forbidden and penal in our country. There were some attempts of collecting eggs, from the side of foreign tourists.

4.1.

Captive breeding is not playing any role in Great Bustards conservation in our country, because it is forbidden to keep these birds imprisoned.

4.2.

There were no attempts of reintroducing this specie in our country.

4.3.

There were no release programs either.

5.

Our country collaborates with Hungary, just for exchanging information.

6.1.1.

Population of Great Bustard is under supervision during all year. For the last ten years, number of individual birds is in stagnation, or getting slightly lower. Today, the number of reproductive females is estimated as ten, however winters population considers 35 - 38 birds.

6.1.2.

In our opinion these measures of protection gave us positive effects, because the number of birds of this population is constant for longer period of time.

6.2.1. - 4.

Longer scientific peaces are not published yet.

7.

Experts from "Zavod za zaštitu prirode" are making plans and programs, however cross-country staff consists of tuitioned hunters.

8.

Measures that have been taken to increase the awareness about the protection needs of the species and its habitat are already mentioned. We can find positive reactions in the attitude of farmers, students and hunters (no politicians). They are getting more and more interested in this marvelous creature, and are educated through lessons, conversations, interviews, etc.

9.

Curator receives material allowance in the form of money, for providing food for Great Bustard during winter.

10.

Protective measures that were used to be used in the first place, are in the use at the moment, but shaped and formed in protective law. The main threats came from cows and other cattle, in the way of trampling over the eggs.