

# WINGED NEWS

# 22, December - July 2015

*Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds*



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## International Waterbird Census in Armenia of January 2015

**C**urrent waterbird census is the 13th census held across the entire Central Asian Flyway. The census was held in the middle of January 2015. All days of the census were favored by fair weather which made it possible to organize counts in the right timeframes with very small deviations.

Like in the previous years, the counts were held in the Lake Sevan basin (capturing the entire water body), in Araks River Valley (the territory of Armash fish farming ponds) and across the Metsamor River System.

Participants of census were ASPB staff members, volunteers and IBA Sevan Caretaker.

During the counts the weather at Lake Sevan was stable, mostly sunny and windless. Various motorboats catching crayfish were the main disturbing factor, as they cruised along both the coastal and the central parts of the lake flushing the birds, so they constantly had to move away, hampering the identification process. Among the positive factors of the accounting period which should be mentioned is the lack of ice across the shoreline, associated with unusual warm weather for this period in the region. All of the above factors have determined the number of recorded waterbirds on the lake. A very high number of Coots (33,128) was observed, which in 50 % exceeds the previous year's number. The number of *Anas* representatives also increased. Hence, 4,533 Red-crested Pochard (only 918 the previous year) were observed. Mallard - 3,312, last year - 1,645. The number of Common Pochard stayed almost at the same level - 3,575 individuals. The remarkable observations were Ferruginous Pochard, Smew and Slender-billed Gull. As the previous year the Ruddy Shelduck was not observed. The surveys carried out on the territory of Metsamor River System confirmed our assumption that this territory has lost its value as a wintering set for wetland fauna. The pressure coming from the hunters during the hunting season and irreversible changes of biotope across the territory of System, all those factors brought to complete impoverishment of wintering avifauna. For instance, during the first count day from 1,239 birds of 17 species 976 or 78.8% were White Storks, which winter here every year regardless the severity. During the counting year the number of herons also increased. Common Crane - 26 individuals, Great Egret - 7, whereas only one Common Crane has been observed last year.

The counts held in the territory of almost frozen Armash fisheries showed that birds' presence is totally dependent on the climatic conditions. During the counts in the form of open water surfaces only small areas of water by few outlets of artesian springs leaved. Altogether 1,215 individuals of 24 species were observed. In warm and snowless years at the territory of these fisheries from 10,000 to 25,000 birds of 35 and more species were often observed. But despite the fact that the open water surfaces were only the 7-8 % of total area of fish ponds, the number of Pygmy Cormorants almost doubled - 167 individuals in current counting year to 81 individuals the last year. Compared to the previous year when no Eurasian Coots were observed, in the counting year its population was equal to 479. The species diversity and the quantity of *Anas* species also increased. Last year only 8 individuals of Common Pochard and this year 100 individuals of 5 species were observed.

Summarizing the winter census, it can be stated that the number of birds recorded in all the territories of Armenia equals 54,695 individuals belonging to 33 species. 95.5% of the observed birds (26 species) were taken into account in the basin of Lake Sevan. Unfortunately, due to the large distance about 3,900 *Anas*, 178 *Larus* and 16 *Cygnus* had not been identified, but they are included in the table of birds marked at Lake Sevan. At Armash fisheries the least number of birds (1,215 or 2.2% of all) were observed. The species diversity observed here included 23 species. The least data in quantity was obtained on the territory of Metsamor River System. The birds of 16 species were observed. The low abundance and the poorest species diversity of birds counted here is a direct consequence of the daily pressure on avifauna across the whole Araks River Valley, coming from the hunters during the hunting season, as well as from the poachers.





## We want you to Spring Alive for Birds this year!

*Make your garden or balcony bird-friendly with Spring Alive!*

**S**oon, migratory birds will be arriving in Europe and Asia from their wintering grounds in Africa. Nature is getting ready for their arrival; are you? Nature is preparing for spring and providing everything that birds will need: thawing frozen lakes; waking animals from hibernation; budding leaves and berries; and taking insects to the air. Millions of birds fly enormous distances every year to feed and breed in Europe and Asia, and they need your support too. All along their migratory routes, children and adults will be excitedly preparing for the arrival of birds with Spring Alive, an international project that launches its 2015 season this week. Spring Alive is a BirdLife educational conservation initiative organised by OTOP (BirdLife in Poland) that encourages children to take action for the conservation of the migratory

birds they learn about.

This year Spring Alive wants you to make your garden or balcony bird-friendly to help support tired birds on their magnificent migrations! We need you to spring to action and make bird boxes, bird feeders and look after your birds as they arrive. Spring Alive educational events and its web page will teach children and adults how to do this. With a record number of 3.9 million people reached through Spring Alive in 2014, this is potentially a strong force for the celebration and care of migratory birds on the African-Eurasian flyway.

As well as the bird-friendly garden theme this year, every year by posting their first sightings of Barn Swallow, White Stork, Common Cuckoo, Common Swift, and European Bee-eater on the [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net) website, children from Europe, Central Asia and Africa create a real-time map of the incredible journeys these birds take every year. As well as by these migratory routes, Eurasian and African schools are also connected with matching initiatives like 'Spring Twins'.

Migratory birds face threats from climate change including drought and mis-timing of the emergence of insects; agriculture; urbanisation; and hunting. With appreciation and support of local children, hopefully these birds can find enough food and shelter to continue to return year after year.

Spring alive for birds!

## “Overcoming challenges” Best Comic Book Contest

**A**rmenian Society for the Protection of Birds, in the framework of “Spring Alive” announces Best Comic Book Contest, titled “Overcoming challenges”.

Participants shall depict in their pictures all “Spring Alive” bird species or just one of them (White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and European Bee-eater).

The competition is open for all schoolchildren both from Yerevan and other regions.

Best 3 works will be awarded by Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds.







## Help Birds: Clean Up Your School Too!

**A**rmenian Society for the Protection of Birds, apart from its scientific and conservation work, pays a strong attention to organizing various educational events. One of those was the last visit of our staff members to Surenavan Village, where we had an opportunity to introduce our two main educational programs - "Bird of the Year" and "Spring Alive". Through the Power Point Presentations schoolchildren got acquainted with the bird symbol of the 2015 year - European Roller. After they were informed about the launch of "Spring Alive", also the procedure how to register their observations on the web-site was explained to them. Later on a quiz upon the information previously provided was organized. Children with the best answers received some promotional gifts. The most active and no less important part of the day was the Clean Up Event. The aim of the event was to clean up the school territory from the garbage



which might be used by the storks in the nest building process. Later this kind of rubbish can be lethal to both young and adult individuals.

Schoolchildren from different ages and classes with a great inspiration were involved in this educational action. Randomly they were divided into teams and under the coordination of ASPB staff in short time they succeeded to collect a huge amount of garbage located in the school territory.

By the end of the event the results were summarized and the teams with the largest amount of collected garbage, dangerous for birds, were awarded with the special prizes.

Other teams got some promotional gifts. All schoolchildren were called to be more careful and attentive to all birds and from that moment and on to avoid littering at the school territory.

Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds thanks all staff of Surenavan Village School for the warm welcome and the assistance in the events organizing procedures.







## Bird lovers celebrate International Bird Day and the launch of “Spring Alive”

If for the most people April 1st is associated with Fools' Day, all bird lovers and ornithologists in Armenia celebrate this day as the International Bird Day.

Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds, without breaking the old tradition established through many years, organized an event in the LOFT Self-Development, which included the celebration of International Bird Day, launch of “Spring Alive” program and, besides that, announcement of the results of Winter Monitoring Campaign along with its award ceremony.

The event was opened with greeting and complementary words, and was then followed by a brief presentation which featured ASPB's key achievements of the last 2 years, current activities as well as future programs in bird conservation.

The results of Winter Monitoring Campaign were summarized, and the participants were awarded with encouraging prizes. All attendees were excited to continue their commitment to this entertaining program.

It should be mentioned that the most important and, perhaps, the main part of the event was the launch of “Spring Alive” Program. All bird lovers were called to join the observations of migratory birds and to submit their observations on the “Spring Alive” official web-site.

Within the framework of “Spring Alive”, guests voluntarily joined a quiz which is available on the program web-site. Participants with best records were awarded with special prizes.

The event was closed with words of appreciation and a call for more active participation. In the end participants were taken to the “sweetest” part of the event - direct exchange of thoughts and the Spring Alive Cake Cutting ceremony. Bird lovers shared their impressions and opinions, exchanged contacts with new friends and promised to keep their dedication to conserving birds.

Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds thanks all participants of the event, the staff of the LOFT Self-Development and calls for all non-attended bird lovers, regardless of age and profession, to join the “Spring Alive” program and submit their observations on the web-site.







## Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds at “Single Cross-border Visitor package” presentation ceremony

On March 19-20 Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds, within the framework of “Promoting Innovative Rural Tourism” (PIRT) program organized by Heifer Project International's Armenian branch, took part in the presentation of “Single Cross-border Visitor package” (SCBV package). The head of the project - Heifer Armenia - cooperates with the colleagues from Georgia, Bulgaria and Turkey.

The SCBV package includes approximately 10 routes, that is to say tourists from all over the world get an opportunity to visit these four countries within one joint package choosing the sites to see in advance. Anahit Ghazanchyan, the head of Heifer Armenia and the program regional coordinator, stressed that the developed routes are rather different. All four countries offer the heritage of UNESCO, delicious cuisine, bird life, seas and lakes of Black Sea Region.

The presentation took place at the Business Hall of Erebuni Plaza Hotel, where



the four participating countries through their own pavilions presented their national cuisine, handmade works, as well as national dance and music. Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds presented in its pavilion various publications

(describing the birdlife of Armenia, organization's past and present history), birdwatching packages, comprehensive information about Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, bird pin badges. All profits from the selling were directed to feeding vulture species that breed in Armenia.



Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds thanks Heifer Project International for the cooperation. Recall that Heifer International is a non-profit organization aimed to overcome hunger and poverty and to care for the environment. Since 1944 Heifer assisted about 22.6 million of needy families to escape poverty and to become self-reliant. Since 1999 Heifer implemented 62 projects in Armenia by assisting about 10.000 rural households to improve their socio-economic conditions. Currently Heifer operates in more than 90 communities in Armenia.

## Results of the Winter Monitoring Campaign



Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds thanks all those bird lovers who didn't remain indifferent and has participated in our Winter Monitoring Campaign. In the long run Suren Haroutyunyan from Vanadzor city was named the best participant. He placed a feeder, took photos of it and made a short video starring the visitors of the feeder: Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch and House Sparrow.

We have also received some remarkable photos from the other participants - Vahram Petrosyan and Kristina Hakobyan. Vahram has been successful in taking photos of Great Tit and House Sparrow during their feeding process. Kristina also succeeded in capturing the House Sparrow through photos and video. The participants will be soon encouraged by Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds.

Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds calls everyone not to limit them by a single participation, instead make the Winter Monitoring a kind of tradition and take care of birds both in cold and even in warm seasons.





## Egyptian Vulture Expeditions in Northern Armenia

**T**his spring, from May 2-9, Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds (ASPB) together with Georgian environmental organization SABUKO (Society for Nature Conservation), organized research and monitoring of Egyptian Vulture in Northern Armenia, which aimed to find out the distribution and population size of Egyptian Vulture in northern part of the country.

Egyptian Vulture is listed both in National and International (IUCN) Red Lists as "Endangered" (EN) species. Team of 4 members, during 7 days, travelled by a pre-planned route in Lori, Tavush and Shirak regions, scanned gorges and valleys for suitable nesting habitats of Egyptian Vultures using binoculars and spotting scopes.

During the expedition many individuals of Egyptian Vulture were observed and recorded, but only 2 active nests of the species were possible to find in surroundings of Dsegh village and Stepanavan town in Lori region. These are the results of first joint field work of BirdLife partners in the South Caucasus region. Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds (ASPB) expresses its appreciation and thanks to SABUKO and especially volunteers from Europe for their efforts made during the expeditions.



## ASPB celebrates Children's Day and Yerevan Zoo Reopening

**C**hildren in Armenia are usually impatient and look forward to June 1st - Children's Day. This day all events take place exclusively for and with children. Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds joined this marvelous celebration and presented its activities at Yerevan Zoo. This year was remarkable for the Zoo as the first stage of reconstruction program has come to final and both adult and children got an opportunity to meet animals living from now on in absolutely new conditions.

The celebration was honored by the visit of Yerevan Mayor and the President of Armenia with his grandchildren. They highly commended the reconstruction and development work realized. And, of course, they joined the holiday celebration.

Our organization was presented with its own pavilion, where children could find publications dedicated to "Spring Alive" and "Bird of the Year" programs, thematic calendars and magnets. Our staff members organized a quiz asking children some questions about bird life. Children providing correct answers were awarded; the others were encouraged to improve their knowledge about birds.

Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds thanks Yerevan Zoo staff team for the invitation and also we wish to congratulate them with the successful reopening!

# ARMENIAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

**T**he Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds (ASPB) is an independent and non-profit making organization. Its main objective is to assist the government in studying and conserving bird fauna and the environment within Armenia.

### Membership benefits

As a member of ASPB you receive the following benefits:

- membership card
- a free ASPB newsletter “WINGED NEWS” twice a year
- access to valuable environment-related literature in the Society's Library
- participation in the Society's actions / campaigns
- information where and when to see interesting bird species

Active members will get ASPB's promo materials

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE

PLEASE TICK THE BOX OPPOSITE YOUR CHOICE

Student Member	AMD	<input type="checkbox"/>	3000
Adult Member	AMD	<input type="checkbox"/>	5000
Children	AMD	<input type="checkbox"/>	1000
Overseas Member	€	<input type="checkbox"/>	50.00
Private sector	AMD	<input type="checkbox"/>	30 000

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