

SHORT NOTES

International Studies on Sparrows
(Intern. Stud. Sparrows)
vol. 30
ISBN 1734-624X

Marcin BOCHEŃSKI

Division of Nature Protection,
Institute of Biotechnology and Environmental Protection,
University of Zielona Góra, Monte Cassino Str. 21 B, PL 65-561 Zielona Góra,
e-mail: M.Bochenski@ibos.uz.zgora.pl

**NESTING OF THE SPARROWS *PASSER SPP.*
IN THE WHITE STORK *CICONIA CICONIA* NESTS
IN A STORK COLONY IN KŁOPOT
(W POLAND)**

Nesting of the sparrows *Passer spp.* in the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* nests is a well known phenomenon, but there are not many papers about that. Usually, there are only short notes in monographic or popular articles or books, both about storks (e.g. Strojny 1983, Jakubiec, Szymoński 2000) and sparrows (e.g. Nankinov 1984, Cramp, Perrins 1994). There is only one paper, treating in details occurrence of sparrows' nests in the White Stork nest (Indykiewicz 1998).

The aim of this paper is to give a preliminary description of this phenomenon in one of the biggest White Stork colonies in Poland – in Kłopot (western Poland).

STUDY AREA, MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research was carried out in Kłopot village (lubuskie land, western Poland), where there is one of the biggest White Stork colonies in Poland (Jerzak *et al.* 2004). The study area is located in the Valley of Odra (Oder) River and is surrounded by arable fields, meadows and pastures and wetlands (detailed information is given in Tryjanowski *et al.* 2005).

Between 17-25 April, 2003 forty natural stork nests or those on artificial platforms were inspected. There were: 16 stork nests located without special artificial platforms on roofs, 6 nests with platforms on roofs, 7 nests with platforms located on electricity poles and 6 and 5 empty platforms situated on the roofs and poles, respectively. During control following facts were noted: occupation by the stork's breeding pair, number of resident breeding pairs of House- and Tree Sparrows (*Passer domesticus* and *P. montanus*) (told by number of singing males or individuals or pairs seen with the nest material) and location of the "entrance" to the sparrows' nests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the year 2003, 16 breeding pairs of House Sparrow and 1 pair of Tree Sparrow, in 9 stork nests or empty artificial platforms were found. Sparrows were using 3 types of places as a nesting space: a) between sticks in large old stork nest on building roofs (2 stork nests with 6 occupied sparrow nests); b) between sticks in stork nest on electricity poles (2 stork nests with 4 occupied sparrow nests) and c) between metal or wooden construction of the artificial platforms situated on the electricity poles (5 platforms with 7 occupied sparrow nests). The entrances to the sparrow nests were situated: a) at the side of stork nests – in case of stork's nests on the roofs, and b) from the bottom of platforms – in case of storks nest on the poles.

Results obtained in Kłopot are similar to that, obtained by Indykiewicz (1998). The largest number of sparrow nests were found in stork nests or platforms located on the electricity poles. There were only two stork nests situated on the roofs that were occupied by sparrows. These results, at least partly, confirm his explanations of that phenomenon. The first, storks' nests or platform provide good, usually covered niche for sparrows to build their nests. And the second, these places are safe and secure against predators such as cats *Felis catus* or martens *Martes spp.* that frequently hunt for birds and their nests. It seems that presence of the storks on the nest isn't an important factor for sparrows. In Kłopot, sparrows were using both occupied and empty nests or platforms. Probably, the most important thing

is the fact that the nests on the poles are almost inaccessible for ground predators. On the other hand, there were no sparrow nests in platforms or small nest (both occupied or not by storks) located on the roofs within easy reach of predators.

The small number of stork nests situated on the roofs and occupied by sparrows can be explained by their construction. They were usually old, quite large nests that had been used for many years. Material constructing them (mainly sticks and soil) is very dense, compact and hard and because of that, does not supply good spaces for nest building for sparrows.

In addition to House- and Tree Sparrow nest, two nests of Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, were also found in two stork nests located on electricity poles.

REFERENCES

- Cramp S., Perrins C.M. [eds.] (1994) – The birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. VIII – Oxford University Press, 906 p.
- Indykiewicz P. (1998) – Breeding of the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*, and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* in the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* nests – Not. Ornit., 39: 97-104 (in Polish, English summary).
- Jakubiec Z., Szymoński P. (2000) – [Stork and storkies] – PTPP „proNatura”, Wrocław, 144 p. (in Polish).
- Jerzak L., Radkiewicz J., Bocheński M. (2004) – Long-term dynamic of white stork population and breeding success in colony in the village Kłopot near Oder, W Poland – Zeszyty Naukowe UZ (Inżynieria Środowiska), 131: 159-164 (in Polish, English summary).
- Nankinov D.N. (1984) – Nesting habits of Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (L.) in Bulgaria – International Studies on Sparrows, 11 (1): 47-70.
- Strojny W. (1983) – [White Stork] – KAW, Wrocław, 56 p. (in Polish).
- Tryjanowski P., Jerzak L., Radkiewicz J. (2005) – Effect of water level and livestock on the productivity and numbers of breeding white stork – Waterbirds (in press).