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Studying the behaviour of birds during the solar eclipse on August 11, 1999

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The solar eclipse on August 11, 1999 covered the whole territory of Bulgaria. It was total to northeast from the line connecting Ruse and Varna, and partial in the rest of the country. The beginning of the partial eclipse was at 12^{35} - 12^{46} in the different regions. The moon shaded the sun completely between 14^{01} and 14^{12} and the end of the partial eclipse was at 15^{24} - 15^{34} . The solar eclipse is an extreme situation of fast reduction and after that fast restoration of the power of the solar impact on the Earth. Specific changes in the magnetosphere, ionosphere and atmosphere appear during the solar eclipse, when the flow of the solar radiation and corpuscular flex decrease sharply. The air temperature near the surface drops and the earth magnetic field varies strongly (Dermendjiev et al. 1999). As a natural phenomenon the solar eclipse influences the animals on the Earth. Unfortunately the matter is almost unstudied not only in Bulgaria, but in the whole world. There are only notes of common character, mainly in press and popular publications (some of them distorted and exaggerated) about the reactions of the domestic and wild birds during previous eclipses. Our study is a realisation of the National Programme of Bulgarian Academy of Science for studies and observations during the solar eclipse on August 11, 1999.

Materials and methods

The Bulgarian Ornithological Centre organised on a large scale observations of birds behaviour during the solar eclipse. They were performed with united methods in 16 points in Bulgaria: 6 in the zone of the total solar eclipse and 10 in the zone of the partial solar eclipse (Fig. 1, Table 1). More than 30 professional and amateur ornithologists, collaborators of the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre participated in these studies. The answers of the following main questions were looking for: 1) can the birds predict the solar eclipse? 2) how the birds apprehend and react to this phenomenon? 3) are there any residual reactions in the birds behaviour as a consequence of the past solar eclipse. A special instruction was prepared for this purpose. The observations were performed simultaneously by all participating ornithologists. They began at 10^{00} a.m., e.g. two and a half hours before the beginning of the solar eclipse and finished at 18^{00} — two and a half hours after the end of the eclipse. We used field binoculars and scopes. Also a fullday studies from the waking of birds till their falling asleep (from 6^{00} a.m. till 21^{30}) were performed on August 10th, 11th and 12th in the garden of the Royal Palace in

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the centre of Sofia. The feeding activity of 4 species: European Nuthatch, House Sparrow, Great and Blue Tits, was studied on a permanent feeder (Fig. 2). We recorded every change in birds behaviour. So a total of 166.5 hours of field observations of birds behaviour during the solar eclipse were performed in different points in the country. We observed 14 254 specimens of 133 species, which is 32% of the composition of Bulgarian avifauna.

Species and numerical composition of the birds observed during the solar eclipse on August 11, 1999

Species								Obser	vant	poin	ts						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Podiceps cristatus									15								15
Phalacrocorax										_	_						
carbo										3	3						6
Ph. aristotelis							4	00	40	0.5		10		4-	_		10
Ph. pygmeus							1	60	10	25				15	6		117
Pelecanus onocrotalus														200	1800		2000
Ardeola ralloides								1						4			5
Egretta garzetta		1						10	4					3	9		27
Egretta alba								1									1
Ardea cinerea								10		3				18			31
A. purpurea								6									6
Ciconia nigra						4											4
C. ciconia							8	1000	3		120	200		1444	714		3489
Plegadis falcinellus								1						23			24
Platalea leucorodia														16			16
Cygnus olor								2									2
Anas strepera														1			1
A. platyrhynchos								50		70				210			330
A. querquedula								20	8								28
Aythya nyroca								3									3
Pernis apivorus							2										2
Neophron						_											_
percnopterus						2		4						_			2
Circaetus gallicus						1	1	1						2			5
Circus aeruginosus							7	5	2					2			16
C. pygargus							,	J	2			1		2			10
Accipiter gentilis						1	1				1	'					3
Buteo buteo	2	2		5		3	ı				1			2			3 15
Buteo rufinus	_	_		6		J					•						6
Falco tinnunculus	1	1		U	5							2		2			11
Falco eleonorae	•				0			1				2		2			1
Coturnix coturnix		2					2	1									5
Phasianus		_					_	•									
colchicus				1													1
Rallus aquaticus	_						1										1
Gallinula chloropus	1						3							1			5
Fulica atra								15									15

Continuation of the table

Species							(Obser	vant	poin	ts						Total
*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Haemantopus									3	3	4						7
ostralegus									3	3	1						1
Himantopus himantopus														23			23
Burhinus oedicnemus									3								3
Glareola pratincola									3								3
Charadrius dubius		4						8	4	2							18
Ch. alexandrinus									3	8				1			12
Pluvialis squatarola									5								5
Vanellus vanellus		8							J					5	6		19
Calidris minuta		U											19	10	O		29
Calidris alba									1				13	10			1
Philomachus									40					_			4.5
pugnax Numenius									40					5			45
phaeopus											1						1
Numenius arquata								2									2
Tringa totanus								3		3				20	53		79
T. erythropus								_		_				30			30
T. stagnatilis														1			1
T. glareola								45						10			55
Actitis hypoleucos								5	4	3				1			13
Larus minutus									10								10
L. melanocephalus									40	40					50		130
L. ridibundus							1	50	50	80		15		112			308
L. geneii														5			5
L. cachinans							1	50	50	140	140	30	405	1			817
Gelochelidon																	
nilotica									1								1
Sterna sandvicensis												20					20
S. hirundo								2		10		30					42
Chlidonias hybrida								6		,,,		-					6
Ch. nigra								40		60							100
Columba livia																	
f.domestica		200											11				211
Streptopelia turtur							40	30									70
S. decaocto	2	2									2		2				8
Cuculus canorus								1									1
Otus scops																1	1
Athene noctua	1	1															2
Asio otus		1															1
Apus apus		4	6		15												25
Apus melba			50			80											130
Alcedo atthis	1							5						3			9
Merops apiaster						5	15	65						100			185

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Continuation of the table

-	Observant points																
Species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	yanı 9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
	'					<u> </u>	′			,,,	'.'	12	13	1-4	13	10	
Upupa epops Picus viridis						5 2		2									7 2
Picoides major						4											4
P. syriacus			1		2	7							1				4
P. minor			1		_								•				1
Galerida cristata			•			10		10			4						24
Alauda arvensis		20				. •	3				•						23
Riparia riparia							150	200						6	50		406
Hirundo rupestris						30											30
H. rustica	10	20				10	15	500			20		15	6			596
H. daurica						20											20
Delichon urbica	10	50	40		5	120	1				20	20	8				274
Anthus campestris								2									2
Motacilla flava						8	25	80	2					5	5		125
M. alba						10											10
T. troglodytes																1	1
Erithacus																	
rubecula			2		1	4										5	12
Phoenicurus					2	12											4.4
ochruros O. oenanthe					2	3											14 3
Turdus merula			9			3 10											ა 19
T. philomelos			9			4											4
Acrocephalus						7											77
palustris							5	2									7
A. scirpaceus							5	2						1			8
A. arundinaceus							3	2						2			7
Sylvia nisoria							1										1
S. curruca			1														1
S. communis																1	1
S. atricapilla			2			4											6
Phylloscopus			_														
sibilatrix			3														3
Ph. collybita																1	1
Regulus ignicapillus																8	8
Muscicapa striata			2													O	2
Panurus			_														_
biarmicus						4											4
Aegithalos																	
caudatus																9	9
Parus palustris						7										3	10
P. cristatus																7	7
P. ater			_		_											4	4
P. caeruleus	4		2		1	4										6	13
P. major	1		5		8	20							_			3	39
Sitta europaea			4			2 6	4	4					3 2				9
Oriolus oriolus						O	1	1					2				10

Continuation of the table

Species	Observant points																Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Lanius collurio						7	10	2			1					1	21
L. minor							2	3	1					1			7
Garrulus																	
glandarius			1			15										4	20
Pica pica	1		2		15	6	2	10		6	2						44
Corvus monedula		40	6														46
C. frugilegus		150															150
C. cornix			2			4											6
C. corax																2	2
Sturnus vulgaris		50				70	5	2000						1000			3125
Passer montanus	10	2	5		2	50							10	2			81
P. domesticus	10		30		15	30		20			20		20	1			146
Fringilla coelebs			2			7										4	13
Carduelis chloris			1			5	3						3			2	14
Carduelis																	
carduelis	2		3			20										5	30
C. cannabina																2	2
Coccothraustes																	
coccothraustes					2	10											12
Emberiza citrinella		1				15											16
E. hortulana		1															1
E. calandra							55	100									155
Total	54	356	384	12	68	639	369	4435	262	456	336	328	499	3294	2693	69	14254

Results and discussion

Check observations before the solar eclipse

During the studies on August 10th and the morning hours of August 11th, before the beginning of the solar eclipse there were no diversions from the normal behaviour and activity of birds at that time of the day: feeding, watering, water and dust bathing, resting, cleaning of plumage, roaming in the area, laying in supplies and the still breeding birds were protecting their nesting territories, displaying, courting, copulating, taking care of young and so on. The diurnal activity of some of the recorded birds from waking up till falling asleep is as follows: Great Tit — 06^{14} - 19^{40} ; Collard Dove — 06^{18} - 21^{54} ; European Nuthatch — 06^{19} - 20^{10} ; City Pigeons — 06^{25} - 21^{25} ; House Sparrow — 06^{18} - 21^{15} . Sometimes conflicts arose between separate individuals in the flocks — a common thing in the gregarious life of birds. Aggressive behaviour was observed when the birds found food or visited the feeder simultaneously. The quarrelling individuals demonstrated mainly the combine poze "threat-readiness for escape". At most of the time all finished without any fights. As a rule the birds activity decreased with the increasing of sunlight and the warming of the air. Most of the birds rested during the hottest part of the day.

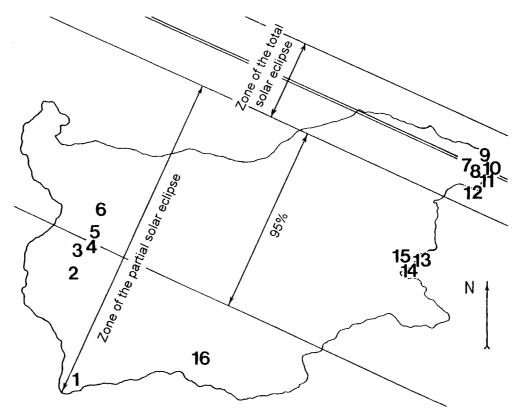


Fig. 1. Observant points, where the studies of birds' behaviour during the solar eclipse on August 11, 1999 were performed.

1 — The ornithological field-station "Rupite". 2 — To the west of the town of Pernik. 3 — Sofia, the garden of the Royal Palace. 4 — Sofia Zoo. 5 — The park of the University of Forestry. 6 — The Iskar Gorge, between Kunino and Karlukovo. 7 — The Vaklinski branch of Durankulak Lake. 8 — Southeastern part of Durankulak Lake. 9 — Between the camps Kosmos and Krapets. 10 — To the southeast of Durankulak Lake. 11 — To the south of Cape Shabla. 12 — Cape Kaliakra. 13 — The old town of Nesebar. 14 — The ornithological field-station "Atanasovsko Lake". 15 — Northwestern part of Atanasovsko Lake. 16 — Central Rodopi Mountains, by the village of Stoikite.

Recorded changes in birds behaviour during the eclipse

Birds did not react during the first phase of the solar eclipse, when 25% of the sun were shaded. They behaved like in cloudy weather. Birds do not feel in advance the solar eclipse as they react for example to the movements of the earth crust preceding the earth-quakes (Nankinov 1977).

When half of the sun was covered the birds and the other animals started reacting (Fig. 3). The eclipse influenced them through the fast change of light, temperature, probably the magnetic field and some other abiotic factors. The birds reactions to the solar eclipse are strictly individual. These reactions have no species, aged or sexual character. Their behaviour when 75% of the sun were covered may be characterised as high excitedness or confusion. In some individuals these reactions were short and passed away (the birds calmed down) soon after the sun was uncovered by the moon and the light increased. In other individuals these reactions continued till the end of the eclipse and even after that.

Immobilisation and break down of the activity appeared in greater part of the birds and some of them fell asleep when the sun was shaded and the light decreased strongly in the zone of the total solar eclipse as well as in forests and

parks in the zone of the partial one. There the reactions were easiest to observe. Before the sun was shaded completely we recorded a movement among almost all passerine birds, which after that went to their roosting places. The wood birds felt the influence of the solar eclipse most strongly. In comparison to the petrifeel birds, they were silent and did not fly. The begging calls of the young birds decreased and stopped.

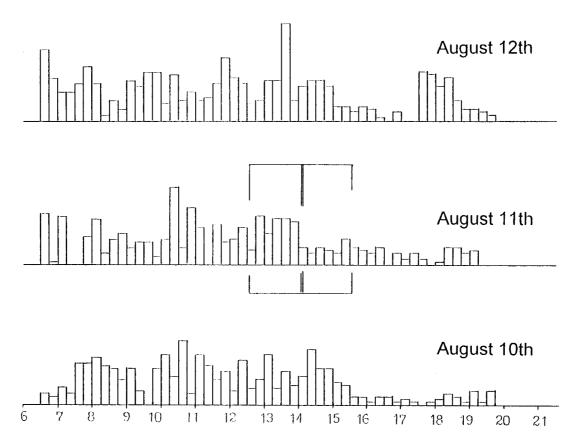


Fig. 2. The rate of visiting feeder by birds before the solar eclipse (August 10), in the day of the solar eclipse (August 11) and after the solar eclipse (August 12).

There was a large scale of reactions in the behaviour of Herring Gulls. The first sign of alarm were recorded in Nesebar after 1300, when the sun was half covered. After that some of them flew in groups of 4-5 birds towards Cape Emine, where a roosting existed at that time. When 75% of the sun were hidden a flock of Herring Gulls alighted on the rocks. Some of them started cleaning their plumage. others were in the water or were picking seaweed on the beach. The withdrawing of flocks towards their roosting continued. A sharp change in their behaviour appeared at 1355 just before the sun was hidden completely. About 250 gulls began circling and cawing over the town. This behaviour of a greater part of the population was an acoustic accompaniment of the occurring stress situation. Only a big danger may cause such group panic of birds, united in flocks. However during these sound communications and visual demonstrations, there were individuals taking baths, picking seaweed and some fell asleep. The situation got back to normal about 15 min after the maximum of the solar eclipse, when the light increased. In the zone of the total solar eclipse by Durankulak Lake the flocks of Herring (and Mediterranean) gulls, which were flying mainly to south after 13³⁵

1/4					_														•							
2/4			-				_		scare					ry direction							٠.		CUVILY	1.	ing off	
3/4									1 1					correction of migratory direction	مرس المرس المرس	- 112	pigeons	_		protection	signals of alarm, "rumana"	Suipod booogo	addressive behaviour		choice of wrong flying off	direction
14.01-14.12 total solar eclipse	confusion	ceasing of flights, stoppage of hunting and	feeding of young	ralling asleep	tions	plumage, bathing, laying, "rumene",	acite citication	suress sudduction	cawing, circling in the air, chaotic flights	start of migration	confusion of	migratory direction	ceasing of the	passage	ding of		ol oli	intense vocalisation o	ווסכימיו ומו סיומי	seeking people s				local movements		
3/4	excitement				inadequate reactions	cleaning of pluma picking, displaying,	arying or plumage									acuvaling the recuiring	reeding migrations		•					1		
2/4	c increased			- Immobilisation				of ai paifian pairon	moving towards the roosting																	
1/4																										

Fig. 3. Characteristic reactions of birds during the different phases of the solar eclipse.

started flying backward (probably towards some roosting places) and some of them prepared for sleeping on the sand by the lake. At 14⁰⁰, when it was completely dark, some of the gulls tried to alight on the reeds in the lake, other flew away towards the sea, where the gulls and the Pygmy Cormorants flew chaotically till 14²⁰. At the time of maximum solar eclipse the Herring Gulls from the Cape Kaliakra flew towards their roosting places on the adjacent rocks, but still not reaching them the sun appeared. The birds were rather confused. They were not prepared for such phenomenon and their reactions were inadequate. After a continuos flying in the air around 14²⁵ although very scared the Herring Gulls returned to their places. They calmed down and began feeding just before 15⁰⁰. At the same time individuals of different wader species (Little Ringed and Kentish Plover, Grey Plover, Sanderling, Ruff, Common Sandpiper) were calm and rested on different places on the shores of the reservoirs. As usual, the Great Crested Grebes were feeding in the sea. The behaviour of birds of prey was as usual, although they had to stop hunting and migrating during the maximum of the solar eclipse because of the darkness. The soaring birds (White Storks, Honey Buzzards, Short-toed Eagles) were recorded in the zone of the total solar eclipse till 14⁰⁰, e.g. before the maximum. A flock of 200 White Storks flew from north over the Cape Kaliakra at 13³⁰. They continued their flight over the sea, but soon they changed the flight direction to southwest and probably alighted on the shore by the town of Kavarna before the sun was completely shaded. A Kestrel and a Montagu's Harrier passed in the same direction. The bird migration continued without interruption in the zone of the partial solar eclipse.

We did not observed any changes in the behaviour of Quails. The males were displaying, and their song was heard during the whole study period, including the time of the total solar eclipse. The behaviour of the Red-backed Shrike was normal too: signals of alarm and movement of tail, hunting from the air and on the ground, interspecies form of aggression and protection of territory. After 75% of the sun were covered anxiety and excitement arose in the family flocks of the House Sparrow as it happened every evening. The reaction of the Tree Sparrows was similar. The European Bee-eaters reacted in a different way. Their migration over Bulgaria continued without breaks in the zone of the partial solar eclipse. There were no changes in behaviour and migratory rhythm of birds. Some of the European Bee-eaters in the zone of the total solar eclipse got confused and prepared for roosting. Some individuals were restless. The passing flocks alighted and towards 14⁰⁰ they went roosting too. However, other individuals did not show any anxiety. The swallows (Sand and House Martins, the Swallow) also prepared for roosting in the time of the total solar eclipse. Just before the eclipse some Turtle Doves were displaying, others alighted in suitable heads of trees and prepared for roosting, and third — united in flocks flew towards the confirmed roosting places. In Sofia, the anxiety during the maximum of the solar eclipse was about 10 min. for the European Nuthatch (13⁵⁷-14⁰⁵), which after that continued visiting the feeder. It was from 13⁵⁶ to 14¹² for the Tree Sparrow, about 20 min (1405-1424) for the Great Tit and the House Sparrow, from 1405 to 14⁵⁰ for the Blackbird and 1 hour (13⁴⁵-14⁴⁵) for the Collared Dove.

The changes in the bird behaviour were the slightest in the open habitats in the zone of the partial solar eclipse. The eclipse was like a cloudy day on the Atanasovsko Lake, where we recorded 5987 individuals of 40 species. However there were reactions but only at the time when the sun was completely hidden (14⁰⁰-14¹⁵). The White Pelicans dispersed in the lake started gathering in groups. Some flew towards Vaja Lake, where they were roosting. The Black-headed Gulls and the Lapwings also gathered in groups. The Redshanks were calm until that moments, flew off with shrieks. The Swallows behaved for a while like at sunset, flying low over the reeds. After that they continued feeding their young in the nests. The rest passerine birds inhabiting the lake were most sensitive — at that time they stopped flying, singing and feeding their young. The situation returned to normal about 14³⁰-14⁴⁵. We did not recorded any changes in the behaviour of the other birds in the lake (herons, ducks).

In the most peripheral zone of the eclipse in Southwest Bulgaria, on the field-station "Rupite", the activity of the sparrows (House and Tree Sparrows), the swallows (Swallow and House Martin) and some other passerine birds decreased in the time of the maximum solar eclipse.

During the solar eclipse the aggressive behaviour decreased or was lacking in most of the studied species. This happened may be because for a short time the conditions for increasing of activity and feeding became more favourable — the fatiguing bright sun disappeared, the temperature and light dropped down. We recorded signs of aggression only in the behaviour of the Jay and Raven. S.Kumar (1981) wrote about increased aggressiveness of the Little Egrets during the solar eclipse in India in 1980. The Little Egrets were producing more tinkled sounds and were the originators of many fights. At the same time the Cattle Egrets were less noisy and aggressive. The main purpose of the bird song is to attract a mate and for protection of the breeding territory. However the unexpected song of some males during the solar eclipse is an adequate, substitutional reaction, proving the confusion of these individuals. We recorded such reactions in the behaviour of the Scops Owl, European Cuckoo, Turtle Dove, Collard Dove, Great Tit, Marsh Warbler and the Corn Bunting. The reaction of the Chaffinch was very interesting. It reacted with alarm calls and also with so called "rumene"— signal produced by the adult birds before rain, and sometimes at danger. The cleaning and arrangement of plumage, the picking and bathing were the substitutional reactions of some species. We think that the behaviour of the Shags, nesting on the rocky shore between Cape Kaliakra and Tjulenovo, was inadequate too. They were standing on the rocks with stretched wings and were "drying them on the sun", even when it was completely dark. Perhaps they did so because a breeze appeared after the sun was hidden and it could dry their feathers too. Some birds lost their fear of people and sought their protection during the maximum of the solar eclipse. An European Robin stood near the people by a chalet in Rhodopi Mountains for almost an hour (after 14^{00}).

The weather was sunny and hot (34-39 °C) during all three days. The birds were decreasing the heat-generating and increasing the heat-releasing with lessening of the diurnal activity, bathing, searching of shade and cool places, with different heat-regulating poses (slightly open wings and bill and others). Their diurnal activity was in inverse proportion to the high temperature and intense sunlight. The temperature dropped down on August 11th after 13⁰³, when 75% of the sun were hidden. At that time in the course of half an hour the temperature

dropped down with 8°C in the Iskar Gorge and reached a minimum of 27.6°C at 14⁰⁵. On the sea coast the temperature dropped down (under 20°C) and a strong cool breeze appeared from the sea. The decreased sunshine and temperature during the solar eclipse were a temporal saving of birds from the heat. They created more favourable conditions and stimulated some of the inhabitants of the open areas. The feeding activity of swifts (Alpine and Common) and some of the swallows (House Martin, Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Crag Martin) increased as at sunset. Without any interruption during the whole solar eclipse the Alpine Swifts united in flocks were feeding (over Sofia, the Iskar Gorge and on other places). The swallows did the same, but part of them alighted on buildings or rocks and rested. The increased activity of these and some other species during the partial solar eclipse may be in connection with the resumed flight of the insects they fed on. At that time of the year the swarming of small insects take place at sunset and during the solar eclipse on August 11th, when the light and temperature dropped down. At dawn and dusk of the hot August days the city pigeons roamed for feeding between the city centre and the surrounding of Sofia (Nankinov 1982). This roaming almost stopped during the rest of the day. On August 11th with the decreasing of light and temperature (13³⁰) the pigeons resumed their roaming for food and continued till 15⁰⁰, when the moon uncovered half of the sun. The flights stopped for about 15 min (13⁵⁵-14¹⁰) during the maximum of the solar eclipse. In that case the feeding activity of pigeons corresponded to their activity from 19¹⁵ to 21¹⁵ and from 6²⁵ to 8³⁰.

In August, many bird species migrate over the territory of Bulgaria. They fly towards their wintering grounds during the day as well as during the nights. The high night migrations are prevailing. The decreased light at sunset is one of the factors setting the beginning of the migratory anxiety and the night migrations. It is known (Kiepenheuer 1980) that in some birds the migratory anxiety starts at light 1-10 lk. The sharp decreased of light during the solar eclipse on August 11th probably caused anxiety and start of migration of many passing birds on the territory of our country. Probably it influenced stronger the young birds migrating towards the wintering grounds for the first time. The low light during the solar eclipse stimulated the birds with twilight and nocturnal activity. Around the maximum of the solar eclipse the vocalisation of the Water Rail was more intense than at the morning or noon hours. In Sofia, we heard the Little Owl which at the beginning of August usually calls between 300 and 600 a.m.

It is known that birds use the sun as a compass during distant migrations. At daytime the migrants regularly correct their movement orientating from the sun. It is supposed that the birds use the sun-compass orientation when choosing and maintaining the inborn migratory direction (Weltschko 1981). The sudden obstruction of the sun will lead to some confusion of birds. At the same time the inborn vital cycle and migratory direction are programmed in the passing birds and they are influenced by the magnetic filed of the Earth (Griffin 1987). During the total solar eclipse the sun is shaded and the direction of the magnetic field is confused. After the end of the solar eclipse some of the migrants will reorientate, e.g. will correct the mistake and will continued their migration in the right direction. Others will alight on or near the migratory way. May be this is the reason

for appearance of some distant migrants, as the European Robin, Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler and Chiff-chaff, in some of the observant points in the afternoon of August 11th and the next day. During the solar eclipse the ultra-violet emit which the passing birds may use as a trustful orientation point also decreased (Liepa 1986).

May be we must mention about the recorded changes in the behaviour of the cadge birds and some other animals during the solar eclipse. The parrots (of different species) in the Sofia Zoo decreased the vocal communications an hour before the maximum, e.g. when 50% of the sun were shaded. After that they gathered in groups and prepared for sleeping. At 13³⁰ a complete hush occurred and towards 13⁴⁵ the birds were sleeping. The ducks fell asleep too. Only the hens were worried and the Holland cocks were crowing. The birds gradually awake till 14³⁰ when half of the sun was released. Bats (Chiroptera) did not leave the caves in the Iskar Gorge, probably because there they did not record the sudden but temporal change of light during the solar eclipse. Out of the same reason birds and other animals kept in closed, dark premises did not react to the solar eclipse. The Big water frogs Rana ridibunda in the lakes of north-east Bulgaria started croaking for 2-3 min considerably early before the solar eclipse (13¹⁵-13³⁰). They were very active between 14^{00} and 14^{15} in other parts of the country too. At that time the butterflies (Lepidoptera) stopped flying. Frogs and butterflies behaved in the same way at dusk or in cloudy weather. The Field Crickets Grullus campestris started whistling at the maximum of the solar eclipse.

Residual reactions in birds behaviour after the solar eclipse

Most of the passerine birds were "sleeping" in the first minutes after the maximum of the solar eclipse. There were no any sounds or movements. The Yellow Wagtails roosting in the reeds of Durankulak Lake, towards 14¹⁴ started flying off in groups with the characteristic call as they do every morning. Some young individuals were completely disorientated and did not know what to do. The swallows left the roosting later at 14²⁶ and the European Bee-eaters at 14³⁰. We adduce these observations to stress that birds gradually relieved the influence of the past solar eclipse. When restoring their normal diurnal activity some individuals also reacted with signals of alarm. The Chaffinch reacted again with "rumene". We recorded Ravens chasing in the air and looping with loud caws. On the next morning there were no any diversion of the time and way of waking and the beginning of the diurnal activity of greater part of the species. Birds visited the feeder equally on August 10th, 11th and 12th. However there were a certain drop in the feeding activity after the maximum of the solar eclipse (Fig. 2). Although the light increased the birds were somewhat confused when feeding. In the evening they stopped feeding half an hour earlier. The past solar eclipse has destroyed the rhythm of feeding of the birds, because they visited the feeder more frequent in the morning of the next day /August 12th/.

The solar eclipse led to local movements of flocks and single individuals, and their appearance in neighbouring places, where they were absent before that. Therefor an Eleonora's Falcon, the Stone Curlews, Black-headed Gulls, Common and Sandwich Terns, Long-eared Owls, Scops Owls, European Cuckoos, Mag-

pies, Great Tits and other species appeared in some of the observant points after the solar eclipse. We observed certain changes in flight-direction of some European Bee-eaters. After the solar eclipse the flocks which have been roosting in Durankulak Lake flew off to west although that at that time of the year the migration along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is to southeast.

Conclusions

After generalising the results from the studies of birds behaviour during the solar eclipse in Bulgaria on August 11, 1999 we made the following conclusions:

- 1. Birds cannot predict the solar eclipse, e.g. there are no genetic mechanism in their bodies for feeling in advance the beginning of this natural phenomenon.
- 2. The solar eclipse influences the birds (and all living creatures) through the fast change of light, temperature, magnetic field and probably with some other abiotic factors.
- 3. Birds behaviour before the setting of the maximum of the solar eclipse and after it is identical with their behaviour when getting cloudy and clearing up, at sunset and sunrise.
- 4. The first changes in birds behaviour appear when the sun is half hidden. The maximum solar eclipse has an suppressive effect on the living creatures. So the birds reactions are more strong and intense at that phase.
- 5. The birds reactions to the solar eclipse are strictly individual. Birds of one and the same species, sex and age may have different behaviour. Some are rather confused and excited, others have substitutional reactions, third fall asleep. Some individuals are surprised by this natural phenomenon, they are stressed and scared, and react inadequately.
- 6. The behaviour of the individuals in the zone of the partial solar eclipse depends on the concrete area, habitat. The inhabitants of dense parks or forests stop moving and occupy the roosting places, because the light there drops and it becomes rather dark. The birds in the open areas, where the light is more, may only decrease their diurnal activity.
- 7. The partial solar eclipse (the lower sunlight and temperature respectively) creates more favourable conditions during the hot sunny day and stimulate the inhabitants of the open areas. Their feeding activity increases and they start their feeding migrations.
- 8. Birds orientate by the luminaries, the magnetic field of the Earth and others during their seasonal migrations. The obstruction of sun and the occurring changes in the magnetic field may lead to a certain confusion, drifts from the migratory route and even ceasing of the migration.
- 9. Some small and temporal breaks in the rhythm of the diurnal activity of birds, possible drifts from their migratory route or little local movements can be the results from the solar eclipse.

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Проучвания върху поведението на птиците по време на слънчевото затъмнение на 11 август 1999 година

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Проведени са широкомащабни проучвания, организирани от Българската орнитологическа централа, по единна методика в 16 пункта на България. Наблюдавани са 14 254 екз. от 133 вида птици. Установено е, че птиците не могат да предсказват слънчевото затъмнение. В техния организъм няма генетически заложени механизми, които предварително да усещат настъпването на това природно явление. То въздейства върху организмите чрез бързата промяна на осветлението, температурата, магнитното поле и вероятно чрез някои други абиотични фактори. Поведението на птиците преди настъпването на максималното затъмнение и след прекратяването му в повечето случаи е идентично с това при заоблачаване и изясняване на времето, при залязване и изгряване на слънцето. Най-ранните промени в поведението на птиците се забелязват в периода, когато слънчевия диск е закрит наполовина. Реакциите на птиците на слънчевото затъмнение са строго индивидуални. Птици от един и същи вид, пол и възраст могат да имат различно поведение при затъмнението. В зоната на частичното слънчево затъмнение поведението на индивидите зависи и от конкретната обстановка, от местообитанието, където живеят. Частичното слънчево затъмнение (респективно намаленото слънчево греене, захлаждане) създава по-комфортни условия през горещия летен ден и действа стимулиращо върху някои обитатели на откритите пространства, при които активността на хранене нараства и се възобновяват хранителните им миграции. Като следствие от преминалото слънчево затъмнение могат да бъдат само някои леки, временни нарушения в ритъма на дневната активност на птиците, евентуални отклонения по прелетния им път или незначителни локални премествания.

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Встреча среднего пёстрого дятла *Dendrocopos medius* в г. Печоры (Псковская область)

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4 октября 1980 средний пёстрый дятел *Dendrocopos medius* около часа вертелся в саду на углу улиц Псковская и Новая в г. Печоры (57°49′ с.ш., 27°37′ в.д.). Его явно привлекла деятельность больших синиц *Parus major* и болотных гаичек *Parus palustris*, таскавших подсолнечные семечки с кормушки на подоконнике. Однако прилететь на окно он так и не решился. Это была единственная встреча вертлявого дятла в окрестностях Печор за период моих наблюдений с 1965 по 2000 годы.

В своей сводке А.С.Мальчевский и Ю.Б.Пукинский (1983, с. 478) пишут: "Все сообщения о якобы имевших место встречах средних пестрых дятлов на территории Ленинградской обл. были ошибочными: их путали с молодыми большими пестрыми дятлами. Из достоверных указаний можно сослаться лишь на сообщение Н.А.Зарудного [1910], отмечавшего, что в конце прошлого столетия несколько экземпляров этого вида было добыто в гнездовой период в окрестностях Пскова". У Н.А.Зарудного (1910, с. 99) читаем: "Picus medius, L. Очень редкая гнездящаяся птица Псковской губернии. Один экземпляр, добытый г-ом Даниловым в собственном имении в Торопецком уезде в VI.1893 г., имеется в моей коллекции. Около с. Нестеры (Островский уезд) 10.VI.1895 г. я добыл один экземпляр в лиственной роще. В том же году один экземпляр был убит В.П.Гиллейн-фон-Гембиц в VII в окрестностях Пскова". В сводке "Птицы Западной Палеарктики" (Статр 1985) в гнездовую часть ареала вертлявого дятла включена часть Псковской обл. на север до Пскова, очевидно, на основании данных Н.А.Зарудного. В последнем списке птиц Псковской обл. (Урядова, Щеблыкина 1993) Dendrocopos medius приводится в качестве очень редкой гнездящейся птицы, хотя на протяжении XX в. никаких сведений о нём с территории области в орнитологической литературе не появлялось.

Поэтому столь неожиданна находка в 2000 году гнезда среднего пёстрого дятла в парке г. Ряпина, расположенного всего в 30 км к северосеверо-западу от г. Печоры, в низовьях р. Выханду, впадающей в Псковское озеро напротив мыса Мтеж. Это первый зарегистрированный случай размножения вертлявого дятла в Эстонии. Дупло (леток 40×37 мм) было сделано в живом дубе *Quercus robur* на высоте 5.6 м. Выдалбливание дупла началось 18 апреля, яйца отложены в начале мая, вылупление птенцов произошло 18 или 19 мая. Выводок погиб: 6 июня в дупле найдены лишь два мёртвых птенца (Kinks, Eltermaa 2000).

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Зимовка обыкновенной гаги Somateria mollissima в Санкт-Петербурге

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В настоящее время установлено, что обыкновенная гага Somateria mollissima гнездится на некоторых островах Финского залива, входящих в територию Ленинградской обл. (Носков и др. 1993; Бузун, Мераускас 1993; Леоке 1999;Бубличенко 2000), а также на северных островах Ладожского озера (Медведев, Сазонов 1994; Михалёва, Бирина 1996, 1997; Кондратьев, Лапшин 2001). В начале 1980-х А.С.Мальчевский и Ю.Б.Пукинский (1983) полагали, что гаги могут лишь изредка и в небольшом числе зимовать на Финском заливе, поскольку в 1969 и 1970 их наблюдали на не замерзающих всю зиму полыньях и на фарватере. Что касается реки Невы, то эти авторы упоминают про неоднократные встречи гаг на реке в черте Санкт-Петербурга в конце XIX в., ссылаясь при этом на Е.А.Бихнера (1884). Это

же утверждение повторяется и в монографии В.М.Храброго (1991). Очевидно, что здесь возникло какое-то недоразумение, поскольку в цитируемой работе Е.А.Бихнера о гаге сказано только то, что этот вид следует исключить из списка птиц Санкт-Петербургской губернии.

20 января 2001 в Санкт-Петербурге на Малой Неве (чуть ниже Биржевого моста, около правого берега) я заметил самку обыкновенной гаги. Птица кормилась, плавая вдоль края ледового припая, погружая в воду голову, как крохаль. Известно, что гаги при движении под водой используют крылья. При нырянии гага делает характерное движение, начиная раскрывать крылья до погружения, когда они ещё находятся в воздухе. Таким образом гага погружается в воду с полураскрытыми крыльями, производя довольно громкий всплеск. Следует отметить, что охота гаги была очень эффективной. Неудачных нырков практически не было, и птица появлялась на поверхности воды почти всегда с рыбкой в клюве.

В последующие дни гага продолжала держаться практически на одном месте. 24 января к ней присоединилась ещё одна самка гаги. В этот же день здесь появился также взрослый самец морянки *Clangula hyemalis*. Обе гаги интенсивно кормились в светлое время суток и, судя по нашим наблюдениям, питались исключительно рыбой. Обычно они охотились вблизи берега, на мелководье. Иногда ныряли далеко под лёд. В то же время одну из птиц изредка можно было видеть ныряющей практически посреди фарватера.

После сильных февральских морозов поверхность открытой воды сократилась до небольшой полыньи непосредственно под пролётом Биржевого моста. Обе гаги продолжали держаться в этом месте. Теперь они обычно ныряли без предварительного высматривания добычи и на большую глубину, находясь под водой до минуты и более. С увеличением светового дня гаги стали всё больше времени проводить на льду у края полыньи, отдыхая или занимаясь уходом за пером.

До 14 марта гаги продолжали находиться у Биржевого моста, хотя к этому времени уже значительная часть акватории Большой Невы была свободна ото льда. 15 марта у моста осталась лишь одна птица, которая продолжала находиться здесь до разрушения ледового покрова на Малой Неве (2-3 апреля) и некоторое время после. Вторая самка переместилась на Большую Неву, и её можно было наблюдать здесь на разных участках, в основном ниже моста Лейтенанта Шмидта. Обоих птиц продолжали встречать до 5 апреля включительно — одну на Малой Неве, другую на Большой Неве. Затем обе гаги одновременно покинули район зимовки.

Таким образом, можно сделать вывод, что в настоящее время возможна полноценная зимовка обыкновенной гаги на Неве в пределах Петербурга, даже в условиях сравнительно суровой и затяжной зимы.

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К зимней орнитофауне Кенозерского национального парка (Архангельская область)

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Наблюдения проводили во второй половине января 2001 в южной части Кенозерского национального парка. Общая протяжённость маршрутов составила 62.6 км. В лесных угодьях ширина учётной полосы принята в 50 м, в населённых пунктах — 100 м. Использованы также опросны сведения.

Anas platyrhynchos. Стаю крякв примерно из 10 особей мы подняли с незамерзающей полыньи в среднем течении р. Порженка 22 января. По словам главного охотоведа парка М.В.Калитина, утки держатся здесь с осени.

Accipiter gentilis. Тетеревятника встретили 22 января на р. Порженка недалеко от полыньи. Возможно, ястреб караулил держащихся здесь крякв.

Bonasa bonasia. Единственная пара рябчиков встречена 19 января. Плотность вида очень низкая, что связано, возможно, с погодными условиями осени и зимы — сильные продолжительные дожди, сильные морозы при малоснежье, частое чередование оттепелей и морозных периодов. Даже в конце января рябчики ночевали в полулунках. Положение птиц усугубилось малым количеством серёжек у берёзы и ольхи. По словам работников парка, зимой 2000/2001 наблюдалась массовая гибель как рябчиков, так и других тетеревиных.

Lyrurus tetrix. Плотность населения в ельниках — 1.32 ос./100 га. Вне маршрутов мы видели всего 3 тетерева. Низкая численность обусловлена, видимо, теми же причинами, что и у рябчика.

Tetrao urogallus. Глухарь был малочислен (в ельниках 0.44 ос./100 га).

Lagopus lagopus. Малочисленна. Инспектор охраны В.С.Портнов видел пару белых куропаток 17 января у дер. Орлово. Один из местных жителей поднял 4 куропатки у оз. Меньшее 20 января. Мы встретили наброды нескольких особей у дер. Труфаново 25 января.

Dryocopus martius. Желну видели 20, 24 и 26 января. 24 января дятла сопровождала стайка пухляков.

Picoides tridactylus. Одиночного трёхпалого дятла видели 23 января в дер. Морщихинская. Птица кормилась на строительных лесах у церкви.

Dendrocopos major. Многочислен. Плотность населения, ос./100 га: в ельниках 16.74, в сосняках 20.0, в березняках 10.81. 26 января в ельнике с одной точки одновременно видели 6 больших пёстрых дятлов. В течение всего светлого времени суток часто слышалась барабанная дробь.

Dendrocopos minor. Малочислен.

Bombicilla garrulus. Голоса стайки свиристелей слышали 24 января в дер. Морщихинская. По словам местных жителей, осенью 2000 свиристель был многочисленным на пролёте.

Corvus corax. Мы неоднократно встречали воронов как в лесу, так и около жилья человека. 23 января на краю дер. Морщихинская ворон подпустил одного из нас на расстояние 3 м. 27 января видели ворона, что-то расклёвывающго на крыше дома.

Corvus cornix. Серая ворона встречалась только в жилых деревнях.

Corvus monedula. Обычный вид населённых пунктов.

Perisoreus infaustus. Одиночную кукшу встретили 23 января недалеко от оз. Верхнее.

Garrulus glandarius. 23 января у оз. Масельгское видели двух одиночных соек, подбиравших пищевые отбросы на стоянках рыбаков.

Pica pica. Встречалась только в жилых населённых пунктах. 27 января в дер. Морщихинская встретили временное скопление из 7 сорок.

Cinclus cinclus. По сведениям работников парка, оляпка встречается на незамерзающих участках рек Порженка и Куломка.

Aegithalos caudatus. Обычен. 23 января на пути в 15 км мы встретили 3 стайки по 3-4 особи. Ополовники придерживаются участков с преобладанием ольхи и берёзы.

Parus major. Большая синица встречалась возле жилья человека. Наблюдалась также у охотничьих избушек, кордонов. **Parus caeruleus**. Две одиночные лазоревки отмечены 23 января на маршруте дер. Масельга — дер. Морщихинская. Стайку из 5 птиц встретили 25 января в окрестностях дер. Труфаново.

Parus montanus. Обычен. Чаще всего встречался в ельниках, где его плотность составила 12.33 ос./100 га. Пухляки наблюдались в обществе с лазоревками, пищухой, желной и большим пёстрым дятлом.

Certhia familiaris. 20 января в ельнике встретили одиночную пищуху, державшуюся вместе с пухляками и большим пёстрым дятлом.

Carduelis carduelis. Две стайки щеглов (примерно 30 и 20 особей) наблюдались в окрестностях дер. Морщихинская 23 и 27 января. Птицы кормились на репейнике. Следы кормёжки щеглов 25 января отметили на окраине дер. Труфаново.

Acanthis flammea. Одиночную чечётку встретили 19 января у кордона "Думино".

Loxia curvirostra. Численность клестов-еловиков была высокой, что связано с хорошим урожаем семян ели. Плотность, ос./100 га: в ельниках 48.6, в сосняках 95.0, в березняках 97.29, в деревнях 63.33. Много клестов держится в жилых и брошенных деревнях, а также у кордонов, где птицы добывают минеральный корм. Поедают смоченных человеческой уриной снег, щиплют волокна древесины и мох, пропитанные раствором соли. 27 января в дер. Морщихинская наблюдали стаю примерно из сотни клестов. Около 20 птиц отщипывали извёстку и строительный раствор со стены церкви. В лесу клесты встречаются преимущественно парами, очень редко мелкими стайками. Отмечено активное пение, токовые полёты. 21 января у др. Фёдоровская мы были свидетелями драки самцов в воздухе, в результате чего одна из птиц упала на снег.

Pyrrhula pyrrhula. Стайку из 4 снегирей видели 22 января в пойме реки Порженки.

Passer montanus. Четырёх полевых воробьёв видели 27 января в помещении животноводческой формы в дер. Морщихинская.

Выражаем искреннюю признательность главному охотоведу Кенозерского национального парка М.В.Калитину и главному лесничему А.В.Козыкину за содействие в проведении полевых работ.

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"Птицы различных ландшафтов России, их экология и охрана"

Научный редактор В.М.Поливанов

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