

# Brieven

## Booted Eagle at Hensies in July-August 1988

After having studied the photograph of a Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* which was photographed at Hensies, Hainaut, in July 1988 (Dutch Birding 10: 197, plate 142), I question the identification of the bird. The raptor in this photograph is certainly not a Booted Eagle but a 2nd-year Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* or Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, based on the following features which can be judged from the photograph: the wing formula is wrong for Booted Eagle, which should show a long and fingered sixth primary, whereas buzzards do not have a fingered primary here (as can be seen on the published photo). In other words, Booted Eagle shows six fingers whereas buzzards show only five. The wing-tip is intact on the bird as the moult has just started at the innermost primaries. The shape of the tail suggests a juvenile in its first moult as the tail is quite long (tip too rounded for Booted Eagle) and the trailing-edge to the rather narrow wings is

S-curved (there is a clear difference in shape between juveniles and adults in the buzzard-group: adult Common Buzzard has wider wings and shorter tail, adult Honey Buzzard has wider wings and longer tail than the respective juveniles). A Booted Eagle would show more parallel-edged wings with a more square-cut wing-tip and not the rather 'rounded' shape of the buzzards.

The shape of juvenile (also second-year summer) Honey and Common Buzzard is very different from that of the adults but they resemble each other very closely which, on the other hand, is not true for the adults.

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Luc Verroken has commented that the bird in question was, in fact, photographed in May 1988, and not in July 1988 as the caption wrongly suggests. The 'real' Booted Eagle was present from 7 July to 9 August 1988, documented by photographs (Aves 27: 18, 1990) and accepted by the Belgian rarities committee as the 11th record for Belgium. EDITORS

## Yellow-legged Gulls in Poland: a reply to Chylarecki & Sikora

After close examination of the wing of a gull *Larus* published in Dubois et al (1990) and checking skins in various natural history museums, we agree with Eigenhuis (1990) and Chylarecki & Sikora (1991) that the wing belongs to Herring Gull *L argentatus* and not to Yellow-legged Gull *L cachinnans*.

However, in reply to the other two points raised by Chylarecki & Sikora (1991), we have to moderate their assertions. Regarding the claimed breeding of Yellow-legged Gulls in Poland, data collected by one of us (TS) show that this species has very probably bred in Poland in 1990-91. In the first year, three pairs bred among 30 pairs of Herring Gull on Wloclawek Reservoir in the middle course of the Vistula river, apparently without any hybridization. Two pairs of Yellow-legged Gull were present in 1991 (P Zielinski in litt). Apart from these, two other single pairs bred in south-eastern Poland in 1990.

In 1991, four birds of the Wloclawek Reservoir were trapped. Birds of one pair showed a dark mantle, dark yellow legs, toes and webs, yellowish iris and a dark orange orbital ring. Birds of the

second pair had yellowish legs but a dark orange iris. The coloration of the orbital ring is a good character as Herring Gull has a yellow and Yellow-legged Gull a dark orange to vermilion orbital ring (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Three of the four trapped birds showed black markings on the six outer primaries and the fourth bird had black even on the 7th outer primary. We quite agree with Chylarecki & Sikora (1991) that this pattern is typical for Yellow-legged Gull.

Regarding the occurrence of non-breeding Yellow-legged Gulls in Poland, we would like to make the following remarks. Based on the extensive field experience of PJD with 1000s of individuals of the Western Palearctic subspecies of Yellow-legged Gull and with *argentatus* and 'omissus'-type Herring Gulls in northern Europe, we find the identification of adult Yellow-legged Gull, in most cases, straightforward. The combination of size, wing pattern and colour of mantle, which is different from that of 'omissus'-type Herring Gulls, leg and, if the bird is observed from very short distance, orbital ring, lead to the elimination of 'thayeri'- or 'omissus'-type Herring Gulls rapidly. From this field experience, and despite the feelings of Chylarecki & Sikora (1991), we remain confident that the

birds seen near Gdansk, Poland, on 21 and 25 September 1987 (cf Dubois et al 1990) were Yellow-legged Gulls, as well as those seen by TS in July 1991 in the Nysa Reservoir, southern Poland, where c 100 birds were present – the largest group of Yellow-legged Gulls ever seen in Poland.

All the recent records in Poland are possibly connected with breeding cases in the last years in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Ukraine, and support the hypothesis of south-eastern origin of inland-breeding Yellow-legged Gulls in this country. In western Poland, only individuals with flesh-coloured legs occur as breeding birds (typical Herring Gulls).

Chylarecki & Sikora (1991) themselves, paradoxically quoting Polish recoveries, claimed that three first-year birds from 87 'Herring Gulls' originated from the Black Sea (where only Yellow-legged Gulls breed). Hence, the question is not if but how many Yellow-legged Gulls occur in Poland. Even if

most gulls with yellow legs seen on the coast are *omissus*-type Herring Gulls, Yellow-legged Gull does occur in Poland but is still largely overlooked. A colour-ring scheme of the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean Yellow-legged Gull populations could bring much more information on their movements towards the Baltic region.

### References

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## Oostelijke Stormmeeuwen in Nederland

In een reactie op mijn mededeling betreffende oostelijke Stormmeeuwen *Larus canus* in Nederland (Groot Koerkamp 1989) wijst Eigenhuis (1990) onder meer op een onvolkomenheid in de beschrijving van een Stormmeeuw bij Deyenter, Overijssel, op 3 november 1986. Het euvel schuilt in het abusievelijke gebruik van de term 'handpenvlekken' voor de witte toppen van de handpennen en niet voor de subterminale 'mirrors' waar Eigenhuis (1990) op doelt. Begrijpelijkerwijs heeft dit voor enige verwarring gezorgd. De witte toppen aan de buitenste handpennen waren bij de beschreven vogel afwezig, hetgeen duidt op een tweede-winter Stormmeeuw.

Determinatie van Russische Stormmeeuw *L c heinei* in het veld is een hachelijke zaak en ik sluit

me in dit verband dan ook aan bij Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer (1982) en Kompanje & Post (1990). Mijn mededeling beoogde slechts het mogelijk voorkomen van *L c heinei* onder de aandacht te brengen. Daarbij zijn de gegeven veldwaarnemingen niet toegeschreven aan *L c heinei* maar enkel aan – met nadruk – 'oostelijke Stormmeeuwen'.

### Verwijzingen

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