

Birds in the Kyustendil Municipality

White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

This is one of the largest Bulgarian birds - length up to 110 cm, wingspan up to 218 cm. These birds are white and black and have a long neck and slender legs. In Bulgaria the white stork is referred to as “lelyak”, „adja”, “shatarkol”, “shtark”, “zhabar” (frog-eater) or paplek. It has a red beak, with a slightly darker point in young birds. The white stork prefers nesting inside or near towns and villages, making its nests on chimneys, roofs, pillars or isolated old trees. More and more often local people or electricity distribution companies construct artificial platforms for nesting, in order to protect the storks from electric shock or just to attract them to nest there, due to the fact that it is considered a “lucky charm”. A migrant, wintering in South Africa.

White storks find their prey in open areas, meadows, marshes, swamps, as well as near water basins – rivers and lakes. Omnivorous. White storks eat frogs, snakes, insects, rodents, and even small young birds.

Present in almost all towns and villages in the Kyustendil Municipality.

Conservation status: BDA-II and III, BD-I, Bonn C-II, BC-II, European Protected Species – SPEC 2.

Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*)

This is another large bird in the region - length up to 105 cm, wingspan up to 205 cm. A little smaller than its white cousin. It is known in some areas as the “Gypsy Stork” or “Karaleylyak”. The head, chest and back are black, with a metallic greenish to violet gleam. Adult birds have red legs and beak, and those of the younger black storks are greyish-green. They prefer nesting on rocks or high in the tree crowns. Unlike the white stork, this bird species prefers its nest to be far from people. A migrant, wintering in Tropical Africa.

Eats predominantly fish and more rarely amphibians, reptiles and insects. May be seen praying for fish in some of the rivers in the municipality.

Conservation status: BDA-II and III, BD-I, Bonn C-II, BC-II, CITES-II, European Protected Species – SPEC 2.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

A relatively large bird - length up to 102 cm, wingspan up to 175 cm. Often referred to as “ribar” (fisher), “gyolska baba” (lake granny) or gushavets. It is a large grey bird with a long neck and slender legs. Its beak is massive, yellowish to orange during the nesting period. Grey Heron’s legs are greyish-yellow. Adults have white cheeks and forehead, with a thin black strip, resembling a bandana, over their eyes, missing in the young birds, who have grey foreheads instead. This bird’s flight is heavy and slow, with drooped wings. It can often be heard, especially in the late afternoon, calling with its call resembling that of the crow species – „ka-aark”. Nests colonially with other birds of the species or members of the heron family. The grey heron eats fish and rarely amphibians or reptiles. During winter it may also eat rodents. The Grey Heron is a permanent resident of the region, but sometimes nutritional migrations are observed.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-III.

Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*)

A large bird, the length of the male is up to 90cm, almost three times longer than the female. In many areas it inhabits, this bird is also known as a wild rooster or “glushets”. Wingspan up to 63 cm, with noisy, straight-line flight. The male is dark with metallic gleam, long neck and tail, straw-coloured beak and red eyebrows. The female – brownish with dark strips.

Non-migrating species, preferring to nest in old coniferous forests, having abundant undergrowth and small meadows. Nests on the ground. Their song is impressive, each session lasting 7-8 seconds and sounding like “ko-krak-kror“, combined with a “dance“ and it can be heard at a distance of about 300 meters. They eat seeds and small fruits, and during winter – fresh pine needles.

Conservation status: BDA-II, IV, VI, BD-I, II/2, III/2, RB-EN, BC-III.

Hazel Grouse (*Tetrastes bonasia*)

Also known by some of its folklore names, such as “resarka”, “tetarka”, “gabarova kokoshka” (oak hen), forest partridge or girgenka. Relatively small, but stout bird with a length up to 39 cm. Its top side is greyish with whitish wings, and its bottom side whitish with numerous brownish and rusty spots. The male has a clearly marked hood and black throat with a white edge. The female has a brownish throat with white spots and hardly pronounced hood. The flight is heavy, straight-line and noisy. The male’s song is gentle, resembling that of the firecrest, but with gradually lowering pitch.

Non-migrating species, nesting in the mixed forests of Osogovo with abundant undergrowth. Eats on the ground but rests high in the tree crowns. These birds are hard to spot. They eat mainly seeds.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, BD-I, II/2, RB-EN, BC-III.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

The common buzzard, also referred to in Bulgaria as “mishkolov” (mouse catcher) is a medium-sized, stout bird of prey with a short tail and V-shaped profile, during soaring. Plumage, varying from very light to very dark, but the members of the species are usually with a dark-brown top side and a whitish bottom side with dark spots, with fine transverse stripes and a dark edge of the tail in adults. Their length is up to 56 cm and the wingspan – up to 130 cm. It can be observed almost everywhere in the Kyustendil Municipality, and this is easier in winter, when they stand perched on a pillar or a tree top, from where they observe the area, looking for potential prey – chiefly rodents.

A forest inhabitant, nesting on trees and eating rodents, birds, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and carcasses. During the winter they migrate or roam, preferring open spaces, where they search for their prey. Common buzzard’s offspring consists of 2 to 5 chicks.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II, CITES-II, Bonn-II.

Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*)

The long-legged buzzard is a little larger than the common buzzard, and it has longer wings and a more clearly pronounced V-shaped profile, while soaring. It has a single-coloured rusty tail, and its head and chest are light, as the abdomen gets darker at the tail. The flight feathers are light with a dark-to-black edge. Its length is up to 58 cm and the wingspan – up to 155 cm. It can be observed in many parts of the Kyustendil Municipality, but it stays mainly near the nesting areas – dry, karst formations, mainly in the Zemen area.

Nest on rocks and more rarely on trees. Eats rodents (especially European ground squirrels), amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, sometimes carcasses. Non-migrating species, however often roaming the open spaces, in search of food.

Conservation status: BDA-II and III, RB-NT, BC-II, CITES-II, Bonn-II, SPEC-3.

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)

Also referred to as “kuzgun” or “zaychar” (rabbit catcher), this is a large, long-winged eagle with a long tail and a specific S-shaped back edge of the wings. Its length is up to 93 cm and its wingspan – up to 225 cm. It has a typical V-shaped silhouette during soaring and sailing. The plumage is mainly dark brown, combined with yellowish to rusty variations. Young birds have white foundations of the tail and a black edge, as well as clearly expressed white spots in the centre of the wing (primary and external, secondary feathers – with a white foundation). Top of head and neck varying from yellowish to rusty in all ages.

Non-migrating species. Eats mainly mammals, large galliforms, reptiles, and even carcasses. The nest is large, on a rock ledge. The offspring usually consists of a single chick.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, BD-I, RB-VU, BC-II, CITES-II, Bonn-II.

Sparrow hawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

A small bird of prey with short, wide wings and a long tail. Also referred to as “pilishtar” (chick catcher) or “pticharka”. Its tail has 4-5 dark strips. Typical slightly wavy flight – several swings, followed by sailing. The irises of its eye is yellow. Females are larger – length up to 41 cm, wingspan up to 80 cm, with a predominantly grey top side and transverse stripes on the bottom side. Males - length up to 34 cm, wingspan up to 65 cm, dark-grey to bluish on top and rusty-coloured from the cheeks to the abdomen, barred.

A typical forest bird. Hunting mainly from ambush – small birds. The nest is located high in the tree crowns. During winter the sparrow hawk migrates or roams.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BD-I, RB-EN, BC-II, CITES-II, Bonn-II.

Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

The woodpigeon is also known by numerous local and folklore names – “grivech”, “grivitsa”, grey pigeon, “tatal”, “tahtalia”. “tafta”, “tahtakush” or “goldun”. The appearance of the male and the female is similar – these are large grey birds (up to 43 cm long with a wingspan of up to 77 cm), with a characteristic white spot to the side of the neck and a wide white strip in the middle of the wing. Young birds have no spot on the neck. The display flight is short, vertical upwards, with several beats of the wings, followed by a drop with a spread tail. The song is a strong, but “hollow” coo with a well distinguished rhythm and repetitiveness.

In Bulgaria it is a non-migrant bird, but in winter it forms large flocks, often with numerous birds, coming from North Europe. The nest is loose, made of sticks, positioned near the tree trunk. Eats seeds.

Conservation status: BDA-IV, VI, BD-II/1, III/1.

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

A medium-sized bird, with a long tail and pointed wings. Quite common and distinguishable, it is often referred to as “kukaytsa”, “coo-coo”, “kukovana”, “kukaveyko”, “kukudzhuk” or wildstrachka. Alights heavily and drops its wings, keeping the tail up

high.Length – 36cm, wingspan up to 60 cm. Main colour – greyish blue, with barred underparts, as the male has a grey chest, clearly distinguishable from the abdomen. The female's chest is also barred, as some representative of the species have rusty chests. The young resemble the female, but have a white spot at the back of the neck and barred plumage above. The song is a repeating two-syllable „goo-ko“.

A migrant bird. In Bulgaria it parasites mostly on songbirds. The cuckoo lays one egg, much resembling that of the host. The species winter in Africa. It inhabits coniferous and deciduous forests throughout the Kyustendil Municipality. An insect-eating species.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-III.

Tengmalm's Owl (*Aegolius funereus*)

The Tengmalm's Owl is also referred to in Bulgaria as “feather-legged” or “mountain” owl is a medium-sized owl—with a length of up to 27 cm, wingspan up to 62 cm. The irises are yellow. Adults have brown upperparts with whitish spots, and whitish underparts with brownish spears and a white face. The young are brown. The song is diverse, but often a sharp “chuyak” or similar to that of the Eurasian hoopoe – „hoop-oo-oo“, but it can be heard at 2-3 km.

This bird prefers thick spruce forests with small meadows, eating mainly rodents. Nocturnal species. Nesting in hollows, often using old Black woodpecker's nests.

Conservation status: Biodiversity Act (BDA)-II,III, Birds Directive (BD)-I, Red Book (RB)-VU, Berne Convention (BC)-II, CITES-II.

Scops Owl (*Otus scops*)

A relatively small owl—with length up to 21 cm, and wingspan up to 54 cm. The irises are yellow. It is often referred to as a small eared owl, “chufal”, “tuhal”, “tuhkul” or “kyuhalo”. Adults are brown or grayish with light “suspenders”. The body is covered in numerous strips, combined in complex designs with plenty of points and spots. The young birds are lighter and have brighter and more contrast longitudinal strips. The song is monotonous, sounding like “kjooh” or “chooh”, and it is repeated in intervals of a few seconds. There is an interesting legend of two young lovers. An evil witch envied them and decided to turn them into birds. The girl was turned into a cuckoo, and the boy into a Scops owl. They were able to hear, but not see each other. We can still see the cuckoo looking for and calling her lover with its song – „goo-ko“, and at night he answers her calls with a sorrowful “chooh”, „chooh“ (Bulgarian: “I heard”, “I heard”).

It prefers deciduous or mixed forests, but often also nests in parks and gardens of towns and villages, eating mainly insects. Nocturnal species. Nesting in hollows, often using and cavities in buildings and areas under the roofs. A migrant, wintering in Africa. In Bulgaria it mainly inhabits areas at an altitudes of 1000-1200 meters a.s.l. The Scops owl is present in almost all towns and villages in the Kyustendil Municipality.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BD-I, BC-II, CITES-II, European Protected Species – SPEC 2.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

A medium-sized owl—with a length of up to 43 cm, and wingspan up to 96 cm. Some of the most popular folklore names include – “uleykyka”, “ulovitsa”, “yugovitsa”, “huhovitsa” and “uleykyka”. The irises are black. The head is rounded, as well as the wings. The plumage is greyish-brown or rusty-brown. It has a specific facial disk and a black wedge above the

beak, as well as additional whitish“eyebrows“. Characteristic white spots form lines, starting from the bases of the wings. The tawny owl has a strong voice, as its usual call is – “kyuik“ or „hooohooohooohoooo“.

It inhabits a variety of forests, parks with hollows, and often lives near people, resting during the day in some buildings, but it is well protected and hard to spot. Typical nocturnal species, eating mainly rodents and to a lesser extent - insects, catching its prey from ambushes. An aggressive bird, protecting its chicks and the nest in case of danger.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II, CITES-II.

Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*)

This is the largest owl—with a length of up to 73 cm, wingspan up to 170 cm. It is also known by many other names – “buhel”, “pukal”, “buyak”, “boohoo” and “boobooleo”. The irises are orange. An ochre-brown bird with characteristic spots, a massive head, long “ears“ and large strong legs. Its call is the distinctive “boohooooo“ or „woo-hoooo“, which can be heard miles away. The female calls with a harsh kveck-kveck. In case of danger, the call resembles barking – “qua“, which is sometimes repeated several times.

The eagle owl inhabits steep rock vertical walls near rivers and open spaces, where it hunts. Its menu consists of a large variety of birds, mammals (even small foxes), amphibians, reptiles, as one of eagle owl’s most favourite preys is the hedgehog. Unlike some other nocturnal birds of prey birds it does not attack, if the nest or the chicks are in danger, but flies away, often pretending to be wounded, in order to attract attention.

Conservation status: BDA-II and III, RB - vulnerable, BC-II, CITES-II, European Protected Species – SPEC 3.

Roller (*Coracias garrulus*)

The roller is also known as a blue crow, “sinegutka”, “smardovranka”, “pezdrovanka”. It is a stocky bird, the size of a jackdaw, light-blue to greenish and has a rusty back. Its length is up to 32 cm, and the wingspan – up to 57 cm. It has an interesting slow flight, but often makes interesting turns and twists, especially during the nesting season – this is a method of outlining its territory to other birds. The call sounds like a “kraak-ak“. If in danger, the roller repeats a sound like “reehr-rehr“.

Nesting in hollows and sometimes even in abandoned concrete poles. A migrant bird. Eats mainly insects.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, BD-I, RB-VU, BC-II, Bonn C-II, SPEC 2.

Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*)

The black woodpecker is also known as “vaglenar”, “klykavets”, “kovach” /blacksmith/, chukay darvets or klyukodarvets. A relatively large, crow-like bird - length up to 46 cm, wingspan up to 73 cm. The male has an entirely red crown, and the female—a red spot, only at the top hind crown. It has a whitish eye. Juveniles have a brownish tint. The wings are wide and rounded, and the flight is almost straight-line. The call resembles that of the buzzard, but longer— “kyaw-kiyaw-kiyaw...“. As most woodpeckers, it drums on trees for communication or instead of a song.

It prefers nesting in old coniferous or mixed forests, making relatively large hollows. In the Kyustendil region it can be observed nesting in the Osogovo Mountain. Non-migrating species, however often roaming outside the nesting season, when it can even be seen in the park in Kyustendil. Eats mainly the larvae of insects, parasitizing under tree barks.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, BD-I, RB-VU, BC-II.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

A greenishbirdwith a yellow-greenrump and a reddish crown. Due to the fact that it is one of the most common species, it has a number of folklore or localnames – “zhelna:”, “zelena (green) zhelva”, “mravkar”, “kalvandrach”, “kalvondrik”, klyufi-darvo” or yugovitsa. Its length is up to 36 cm and the wingspan – upto 51 cm. Its light eye is circled by a black spot, continuing sideways as a moustache, which has a redcenter in males. Juvenilesare spotty. Before seeing this bird, one can often hear its song, resembling a series of about a dozen repeating “klyu” sounds, ending sharply.

A common species, inhabiting various forest habitats with meadows. Usually eatsants. As all woodpeckers, this is a very territorial bird.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*)

This bird is often referred to with many of the names, common for all woodpeckers, observed in Bulgaria, since few people try to distinguish the different species. A dappled woodpecker, 22 cmlong with a wingspan of 34 cm. White, stripedback, with a light-yellowcrown in males, and white-spotted crown in females. The abdomen is white, but densely barred. This bird’s overall appearance is relatively dark. It does not have a song, and its call resembles that of the great spottedwoodpecker – “keek“and drums hard, similarly to the blackwoodpecker, but with a shorter duration.

A very rare and secretive bird. It can be observed in the OsogovoMountain and prefers theoldconiferous forestswith old, dying trees, as the holes it makes are very distinctive. Eatsinsects and their larvae, as it has also been observed to drink sap.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, BD-I, RB-EN, BC-II.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

One of the most widely recognized and loved bird species, heralds of spring, also known as “lastoytsa” or “randuriche”. Its length is up to 21 cm. It has a black upperparts with a gleam, and whitish underparts, with a dark read forecrown and chest, with a characteristic Y-shaped tail. Its call is a short, high-pitched and repetitive “witt“, and a loud “splee-plink” when excited or in danger. The nestresembles a balloon, made of mud and blades of grass, usually underneath roofs, bridges and eaves. Eatsinsects, which it actively hunts with an open beak and a swift flightnear the ground or high in the sky, depending on the weather. It is observed in all towns and villages. A migrant.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II, SPEC 3.

Rock Martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*)

A compact but stout swallowwith more rounded wings. Its length is up to 15 cm. It is also known as a rock or stone swallow, and its plumage is greyish-brownon the upperparts and a little darker underside of the wingswith contrasting dark underwing, and with white "windows" on the spread tail in flight. The call is a short “pli“, “peek“ or the chirping “tsheer“. Its nestis terraced, made of mud and blades of grass, but unlike the barn swallow, it is built on rocks and more rarely on buildings or stone walls. Eatsinsects, hunting in front of the rock walls or at a great height and often together with common swifts. It is observed in the

area of Zemen and at several other locations, with specific rock formations. A migrant, but often among the first to return to Bulgaria, as early as February.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

Also known as grey wagtail, “planinska (mountain) potocharka”, padnipashka or pindak. A short-legged, but long-tailed –with length up to 20 cm. Known for its distinctive up-and-down tail movement. Legs – light-coloured. Grey underparts with blackwings, yellowish vent and black throat, white eyebrows and moustache. The male has a contrasting blackthroat, and the female – a paler throat. The call is a sharp and high-pitched “tsi-tsi“, and the song resembles a sharp “tseet-tseet-tseet-tseet“.

This bird inhabits mountain streams, nesting in crevices and openings, including in buildings and walls. Prefers places with large, protruding stones, and at the banks – trees and shrubs. During winter, it flies downstream of the rivers. Eats insects.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*)

Also referred to as water blackbird, water starling, “gurgurets”, “klechka”, “podklekar”, water drozen and water sparrow. A brown-black starling-sized bird, but stouter and with a white, “bib” - length up to 20 cm. Juveniles are greyish with numerous wavy lines and a whitish throat. This bird has a heavy, straight-line flight, with swift, sharp beats. Often holds its tail slightly raised. Characterized by a distinctive slight squatting, even while resting. The call is typical for birds, inhabiting noisy mountain streams – a metallic “tsik“. The song resembles that of the bullfinch, but a bit muted.

This bird inhabits mountain streams – Osogovo. The nest is made of sticks and moss, it's oval and situated in rock crevices or behind falling water. The dipper dives and swims under water, where it hunts larvae and various invertebrates. Non-migrating species

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

The dunnock is a brown bird with longitudinal spots and lines, narrow bill, blue-grey head and chest. Length 14 cm. A secretive species, sometimes seen singing on the tops of bushes and trees. The call is a quiet and muted “dicht“, while the song is melodic and long.

In the Osogovo Mountain it can be seen above the forest belt. The nest is built in dense shrubs. Non-migrating species, but during severe winters, it performs short migrations. Eats insects.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

A relatively small species, with brown upperparts and whitish abdomen, as the face and chest are red to rusty. In different areas of the region it is referred to also as redbreast, “chervenoshiyka” (red-throat) and “otkush”. Juveniles are spotty and have no red bib. Length 13 cm. Hops, like a sparrow, but with slightly drooped wings. The call is a “tchick“, and when the bird is agitated – a metallic “tsee“. The song is high-pitched and warbling, but easy to remember and recognize.

Nesting in forests with dense undergrowth, but also observed in gardens and parks. The nest is built in various crevices. Non-migrating species. Eats mainly insects and invertebrates, complemented by seeds and fruits during winter.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

A greyish-black bird with a rusty-red tail, as the females are greyish and paler. It is also known by various other names – “agypa”, “tsonito”, mountain blackwing or ashredtail. Its length is up to 14 cm. Males have a white spot on the wing. The body is upright and strained. The redstart is on a constant watch, shaking its tail. The call is a whistling “swisht”, and the song resembles rumbling stones, going downhill.

This bird nests in rock crevices or niches. It can be observed from the lower parts of the mountains to the alpine areas and often in almost all towns and villages in the Kyustendil municipality. It often nests in the walls or roofs of mountain huts. Eats insects.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

A short-tailed bird, with an upright posture, when perched. It is also known as “tsantsareshka” or “tsantsareshko”. Its length is up to 14 cm. The upper parts are rusty and spotty. It has dark wings, and the tail has a black edge with a white base. The throat and chest are orange. It has a clearly visible superciliary stripe, which is a very high-contrast white in males. The call is a very distinctive – “hue-tac-tac”. The song is also very distinctive and varied, including individual imitations of other mountain species.

A migrant bird. Insectivorous. If the conditions during the nesting period are adverse, it does not nest in that year. Inhabits the high-mountain moist meadows of Osogovo, above the level of the forest belt.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)

A blackbird-sized bird, which much resembles the said species, and that is why it is also referred to as a white-chest or alpine blackbird. Length 25 cm. This bird has a clearly pronounced white “necklace”, whitish in females. The abdomen has a scale-like plumage. The bill is yellow, with a black end and upper edge. The call is a hard “tchik”. The song is melodic, but sorrowful.

A high-mountain species, inhabiting the forests and areas above the forest belt of Osogovo. It migrates or moves down to the pre-mountain areas. Eats insects, seeds, fruits and worms.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*)

The plumage of the male bird is very bright – the head, neck, throat and back are blue-grey, and the tail, abdomen and chest are rusty. All this is combined with a clearly visible white spot at the base of the back and dark wings. Juveniles and females are brownish, with spots and wavy lines, having a relatively short tail. The call is a sharp “tchick-tchik”. The song is melodic, with lowering pitch and is usually performed during an interesting flight, ending with sailing. Body length 19 cm.

A typical rock bird, preferring dry places with vertical walls. A migrant bird. Observed in the Zemen area and in the Osogovo Mountain. Eats insects, invertebrates, small reptiles and seeds. Nesting in rock crevices.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Gold crest (*Regulus regulus*)

Also known as gold-headed kinglet and it is one of the smallest birds in Bulgaria - length 9 cm. It has a short neck and a large head with compact body. The plumage is olive-green on the upperparts, and its bottom side is white-cream. It has a black eye, yellow crown strip (with orange tints in the males), surrounded by black lines, as well as a fine black bill. Juveniles have a greyish head. The call is high-pitched and thin "zee-zee-zee". The song is clear and rhythmically repetitive.

It nests in the coniferous belt of Osogovo, as during severe winters, it comes down from the mountain, often forming small flocks with other songbirds. An insect-eating species. Constantly in motion, often "hanging" in the air.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II, Bonn-II.

Nutcracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*)

A bird with dark-green plumage with numerous white spots. On some areas it is also known as "leshnitcharka", "cherna (black) usoyka", "pastra (varicoloured) orehovka", "oresharka" and "leshnitchar". It is as big as a jaybird - length about 14 cm and wingspan - 53 cm. The wings and tail are clear black. It has a white tip of the tail and white cloaca. Flies in a straight line. A quiet bird with a characteristic, nasal, but harsh call - "krrree-krrree".

Non-migrating species. The nest is located high in the tree crowns. It inhabits coniferous forests in the higher parts of the Osogovo Mountain, but can reach down to the mixed forests, if there is sufficient food. Eats mainly seeds, fruits, but during the summer, also hunts insects and invertebrates, and even small lizards. It stores winter supplies, which it can later easily discover, even under thick snow.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.

Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*)

The alpine chough is also known as the outlaw crow or outlaw daw. It is often mistaken for a very common species - the jackdaw and that is why it is also commonly referred as "galitsa". A bird with completely black plumage and a metallic bluish-green gleam. It has a bright yellow beak and red short legs. Length 38, wingspan up to 74 cm. Juveniles are less glossy. The call is a characteristic 'chee-ow'. The song is fluted and melodic with electric feel to it - "tseeerrr".

High-mountain non-migrating species - it inhabits areas at altitudes of over 1500 meters a.s.l. Nesting in caves, small holes, chiefly in colonies. Often visits mountain huts in search of food. Predominantly insectivorous, but almost omnivorous during winters.

Conservation status: BDA-II, III, RB-VU, BC-II.

Raven (*Corvus corax*)

The largest member of the songbirds' family in Bulgaria. Entirely black with a metallic gleam (blueish or greenish). It has a massive beak and a Y-shaped tail. The flight is very

distinctive, slow and confident. This bird is also known as gravedigger raven, “marshar”, “grobnik”, “karkavets” or „krokon”. Its length is up to 67 cm and the wingspan – upto 130 cm. The call is loud and sharp– “korr“ or something resembling “krok “.

Non-migrating species, pairing for life. Its territory covers large areas. Although, it is not as sociable as the other passerine birds, it can often be seen organizing into small flocks in order to take the kill from larger birds, such as eagles and vultures.

Nesting in the old coniferous forests of the Osogovo Mountain or the rock overhangs of the Zemen Gorge. The nest is made of sticks. Omnivorous, but often eats carcasses.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-III.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Also known as “zimka”, “zvanka” or “papkarche”, this is a large, bulky bird with a short, thick bill and thick neck. Length 16 cm. It has a grey back, black face and crown. The tail is black, the rump is white. Males have bright pink-red underparts, and the females - grey-whitish. Juveniles resemble the females, but have a greyish head. The call is a melancholic, but clear “piyu“. The song contains fluted whistles, as if an unconfident call is heard. The nature of the song makes it sound far away, even if you are close.

Nesting in the coniferous belt of the mountains. Non-migrating species, increasing in numbers, during the winter, due to the arrival of birds from North Europe. Eats seeds and buds. During the summer hunts insects, as well.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-III.

Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Often referred to as “fir-tree crossbill”, “krivočovka”, „krivonoska“, „butach“ /pusher/ (maybe due to the method, it applies to open the fir-cones in order to get its seeds) or “semenarka”. Males are rusty-brown, and females – grey-green. They have dark wings. Its length is up to 17 cm. Juveniles are greyish, with numerous dense bands and spots. The call is a clear metallic “clip “. Often, flying in small flocks, these birds call with a frequent “kip-kip-kip“. The song is clear, high-pitched and usually performed from the top of a coniferous tree.

There is an interesting legend about crossbills, related to the crucified Jesus Christ. According to this legend, the crossbill was the only bird that tried to remove the nails and set Him free. Until then it used to have a straight bill, but after that the bill crossed and bird’s chest was smeared with blood. That is why the Lord blessed them to have eternal lives. During the periods with abundant amounts of fir-tree cones in the coniferous forests, the crossbills breed also in winter, and due to the large amount of resins in the cone seeds, after their death, the birds remain as if embalmed.

These birds nest in the coniferous forests of the Osogovo Mountain. The nest is situated high in the tree crown. During winter, they often move as low as the deciduous forests.

Conservation status: BDA-III, BC-II.



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