

**COMMON CRANE** *Grus grus*

**Žerjav** – več opazovanj v Hercegovini med 6. in 9.3.2002: (1) 5 osebkov v bližini vasi Sajkovići (severni del Livanjskega polja, UTM XJ37), (2) 23 osebkov v Mostarskem blatu (UTM YJ10), (3) 10 osebkov blizu Karaotoka (Hutovo blato, UTM HY26), (4) 14 osebkov na vzhodnem obrežju Buškega jezera (UTM XJ63) in (5) okoli 50 osebkov v letu prek Biokova

During our three-day stay in Herzegovina between March 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2002, the three of us, i.e. B. Štumberger, M. Schneider-Jacoby and the author, were constantly accompanied by most capricious spring weather. The rare moments of spare time and the short stops on the way to our destination in Mostar we dedicated in full to the observation of migrants in this ornithological poorly known region. We were particularly surprised by a large number of Common Cranes observed in various wetlands on our way. For the first time we noticed them on March 6<sup>th</sup> in the northern part of Livanjsko polje near the village of Sajkovići, when five (5) individuals flew towards the northern and almost entirely inundated part of the field. On the following morning of rainy March 7<sup>th</sup>, we counted 23 individuals during a short survey of Mostarsko blato. The cranes were not in a closely-knit group but in four (4) groups with two (2) adults and one (1) second-year bird each (4 x 2 ad. + 1 juv.), and in groups of three adults (3 ad.), two adults (2 ad.) and six (6) individuals whose age,

however, could not be determined. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, we observed Common Cranes at Hutovo blato: in the fields near Karaotok, ten (10) cranes, including two (2) second-year birds, were seen searching for food. Later on that day, two (2) more adults were observed in the meadows along the eastern shore of Buško jezero as well as separate groups of cranes (2 ad. + 1 juv., 2 ad. + 1 juv., 2 ad., 2 ind., 4 ind.), total 14 birds on the SE part of Livanjsko polje. A few days earlier, on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002, two flocks were seen flying over the Biokovo Mts. towards Sinjsko polje, Croatia (I. GABRIĆ pers. comm.). Reiser [REISER, O. (1939): Materialien zu einer Ornithologie der Balkanica, I. Bosnien und Herzegowina nebst Teilen von Serbien und Dalmatien, Wien] recorded several pairs of breeding Common Cranes at Livanjsko polje in 1896, 1899 and 1904. In the northern part of the field (which is owing to the clearly constant presence of these birds called Ždralovac blato, i.e. Crane Mire) he even found nests with eggs and chicks. They were in pairs as early as on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1899, and he estimated the population at 8 pairs. In view of the fact that this largest karst polje in Europe, where large areas of bog have survived, is relatively well preserved, at least sporadic breeding of Common Cranes cannot be totally excluded.

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