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THE CORMORANT *PHALACROCORAX CARBO* IN WESTERN LITHUANIA

ABSTRACT: The cormorant bred in Lithuania in the beginning of 20th century, but next the breeding was stopped until 1990, when 13 nests were found in grey heron colony at Juodkrante. In 1992 50 pairs were

breeding already and in 1993 226 nests were found there.

KEY WORDS: cormorant, breeding population, number trends, western Lithuania.

Until the beginning the 20th century the cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* bred in the lower reaches of the Nemunas river. In the 19th century a large colony was known in Juodkrante, where cormorants bred until 1887. In the 18th century two colonies were known: near Pagegiai and in woods at the Jūra river near Regaine (Ivanauškas 1959). Later on cormorants became a rarity in Lithuania, except for fairly frequent occurrences in the Kuršiu Lagoon and the Baltic Sea coastal area during spring and autumn migrations. At Klaipeda port 10 individuals wintered in 1978/1979.

In the late 1980s the numbers of cormorants increased markedly. They were mainly concentrated on the Kuršiu Lagoon and the Nemunas delta (Balbierius and Gražulevičius 1984). At the Kintai fish ponds 300 birds were recorded in 1989,

about 800–1000 individuals in late August/early September 1990, and 300–400 in mid-August 1992. About 100–200 cormorants were present continuously at the Kniaupe inlet from April to September 1991–1992, and about 100 birds at the Rusne fish ponds.

The first 13 breeding pairs in western Lithuania were found in 1990 at Juodkrante, in a colony of grey herons *Ardea cinerea* (Fig. 1, site 6). In 1992 there were about 50 pairs (V. Pareigis, pers. comm.). In May 1993 the Juodkrante colony held 226 nests. All were situated in Scots Pines *Pinus silvestris*. In 27 trees there were single nests, in 28 trees – 2 nests, in 14 – 3 nests, in 11 – 4 nests, in 5 – 5 nests, in 3 – 6 nests and in 2 – 7 nests (on average – 2.51 nests per one tree). Most of the nests were located in the central part of the grey heron colony.



Fig. 1. Localities of breeding sites of the cormorant in Lithuania (see also Stanevičius and Paltanavičius 1997); 1 – Elektrienai reservoir, 2 – Arnionys fish-ponds and Arinas lake, 3 – Druksiai lake, 4 – Kaunas reservoir, 5 – Daugai fish-ponds, 6 – Juodkrante

Do początku XX w. kormorany gnieździły się nad dolnym Niemnem, a następnie spotykane były na Litwie tylko w czasie wędrówek i sporadycznie zimą (np. w Kłajpedzie, w porcie zimą 1978/1979 przebywało 10 ptaków). Wraz ze wzrostem liczebności kormoranów w Europie w latach 80., również w Litwie pojawiało

się ich coraz więcej, osiągając jesienią koncentracje do 1000 ptaków. Kormorany zagnieździły się ponownie w 1990 roku koło Juodkrante (rys. 1, miejsce 6) w kolonii czapli siwej. Stwierdzono tam wtedy 13 gniazd (na sosnach). W roku 1992 gnieździło się tam już około 50 par, a w 1993 – 226 par.

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