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# AQUILA

A MAGYAR MADÁRTANI INTÉZET

(AZ ORSZ. KÖRNYEZET- ÉS TERMÉSZETVÉDELMI HIVATAL  
MADÁRTANI INTÉZETE)

ÉVKÖNYVE

ANNALES INSTITUTI ORNITHOLOGICI HUNGARICI

International Waterfowl Research Bureau  
Symposium on Population Ecology of Geese  
Debrecen, Hungary, 26-30 october, 1981

1982

MEGINDÍTOTTA  
HERMAN OTTÓ

SZERKESZTI  
STERBETZ  
ISTVÁN

FUNDAVIT  
O. HERMAN

EDITOR  
I. STERBETZ



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AQUILA



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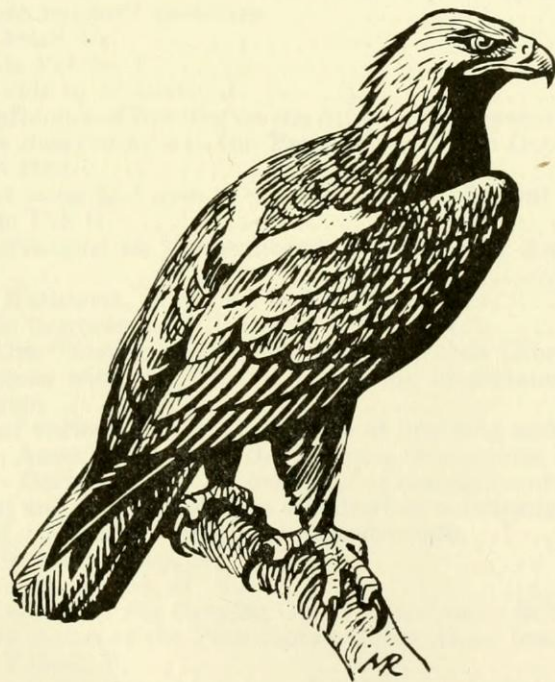
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## INTRODUCTION

### International Waterfowl Research Bureau

#### *The Symposium on "Population ecology of geese"*

For many years now, IWRB's annual meeting has included a symposium on a scientific subject. Thus in 1972 at Brno, Czechoslovakia, the subject was "Rational Use of Waterfowl Resources"; in 1973 at Warsaw, Poland, "Waders"; in 1975 at Stockholm, Sweden, "Sea ducks"; at Alushta, USSR in 1976 "Mapping of Waterfowl Distributions, Migrations and Habitats"; at Gwatt, Switzerland in 1977 "Feeding Ecology of Waterfowl"; at Carthage, Tunisia in 1978 "Colonially-nesting Waterfowl"; while at Sapporo, theme of a symposium in Hungary, reputed throughout the world as a major staging-area for migrating geese, some aspect of goose biology was an obvious choice, the more so as geese had not been covered in recent IWRB symposia.

The subject chosen was "Population ecology of geese". The aim behind this choice of subject was to clarify the present size of goose populations, and, more important perhaps, to explain the reasons for changes in numbers. Special attention was devoted to three geese of particular interest to Hungary: Greylag Goose *Anser anser* because it is common and increasing, Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* because, though formerly common in Hungary, it is now rare and decreasing, and Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, because, though the world population is small and limited in range, its occasional appearances in Hungary are becoming somewhat more frequent. The other special aim of the symposium was to attract contributions on population ecology of geese from central and eastern Europe, areas of particular interest to goose specialists not only in Hungary.

It will be apparent from the papers published in this volume that several *Anser anser* populations are increasing, though there is concern about Spanish wintering-grounds and there is insufficient information about this species in parts of eastern Europe. *Anser erythropus* obviously arouses considerable concern, and there is a very urgent need to discover and study its wintering areas in southern Europe or western Asia. *Branta ruficollis* now seems to be holding its own. The Symposium also drew special attention to the reduced numbers of Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* and Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*. For all geese, it is clear that habitat conservation, whether in wintering areas, staging-areas (especially in spring) or in the breeding ground, is the major priority.

## The International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB)

IWRB is an international non-governmental organization, established in 1954 "to stimulate and coordinate, on the international plane, research and conservation involving waterfowl and wetlands". It operates through national delegates and research groups, both of which are represented on the Executive Board. At present 32 countries appoint national delegates, though there are informal contacts with very many more. There are 14 research groups, some of them coordinating censuses or detailed research on particular species groups, some devoted to more general topics such as Feeding Ecology, Hunting Rationalization or Wetland Management. IWRB is financed by contributions from member states, by a grant from World Wildlife Fund and by sales of its publications; much of its work however is carried out by ornithologists working in their own time or in time made available by their employers for IWRB activities. IWRB Headquarters, after being first at the British Museum, London, then at the Tour du Valat, Camargue, France are now in Slimbridge, England, where Prof Matthews, the Director of IWRB, is Director of Research at the Wildfowl Trust.

IWRB has been closely connected with the "Ramsar" Convention (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat) since its inception. Governments which become Contracting Parties to the Convention list at least one wetland of international importance in their territory and accept a general obligation to make wise use of their wetlands. By November 1981, 31 states were Contracting Parties and had listed 234 wetlands covering seven million hectares.

### The Hungarian organizers

The Symposium, together with IWRB's XXVII<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting was held at the Hotel Arany Bika, Debrecen, from 26 October to 1 November 1981. Arrangements for the meeting were in the capable hands of the National Authority for Environment Protection and Nature Conservation (Hungarian initials OKTH; Head office: Költő utca 21, 1121 Budapest XII.). Mr. Zoltan Rakonczay, Vice President for OKTH, attended much of the meeting, the symposium, and the study tours. Dr. István Sterbetz, of the Hungarian Ornithological Institute (Madártani Intézet, address as OKTH) was Honorary Chairman of the Symposium, as befitted his great expertise and experience in goose and other studies east of the Danube. Members of the Hungarian Ornithological Society (Magyar Madártani Egyesület) also took part.

During the study tours, the participants visited a number of major goose areas in eastern Hungary, many of them listed under the Ramsar Convention. Special mention should be made of: the Hortobágy National Park, visited by horse-drawn carts on 28 October; of the Kardoskút Reserve on 31 October, where magnificent views were obtained of some 6000 Cranes *Grus grus* as well as of flocks of White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* and some Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus*; and of the Kiskunság National Park where a flock of 49 Great Bustards *Otis tarda* bid delegates farewell on 1 November.