

## The nesting by the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) in the Towns and Villages of Bulgaria

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### Introduction

In the past the Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* in Bulgaria only bred on the rocks and along coast of the Black Sea. More than 100 years ago a part of the bird began nesting on the roofs of the houses in the coastal towns and villages. During the period 1890-1893, Reiser (1894) found them breeding in the cities near the sea. We suppose that in Europe this phenomenon first occurred in Bulgaria. The explanation must be probably sought in the lack of safe places for breeding, in the increased density of the population and the negative human role in the coastal area colonies.

### Material and Methods

The information for this report was collected during the period 1972-1992, and also via questionnaires sent (1979, 1981 and 1992) to the employees of the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre, hunters and biology teachers, to whom I am most grateful.

### Results and Discussion

The safe nesting upon the roofs of the houses, the availability of food on the town rubbish dumps, in combination with the increasing pollution of the

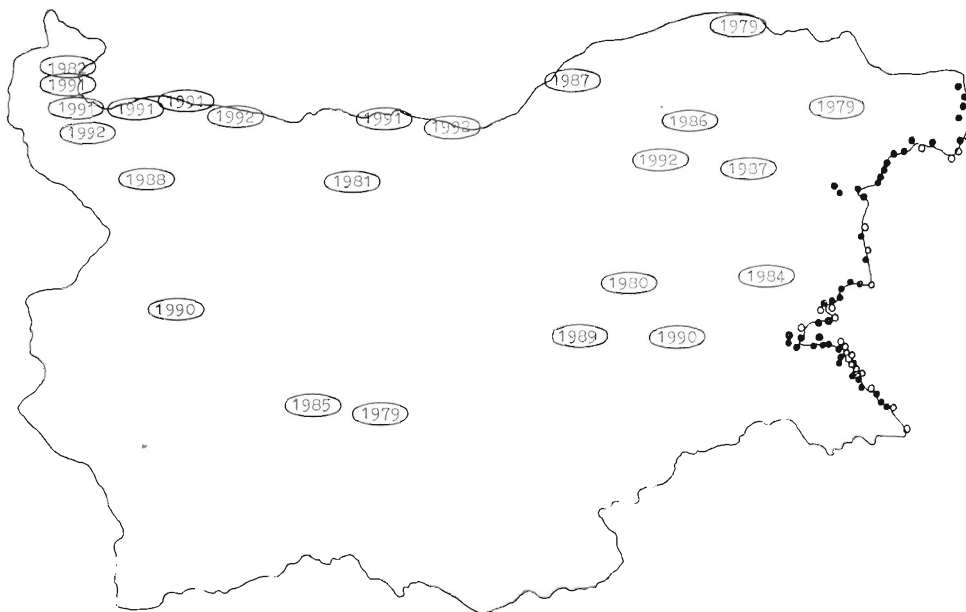


Fig. 1 - Herring Gull resting in the towns and village in Bulgaria.  
○ nesting on rocks and along the Black Sea  
● nesting on houses in the towns and villages near the Black Sea  
1979 year of settlement in the towns and villages in the interior of the country

Black Sea and the depletion of its fish population, led to the synanthropization of the Herring Gull in Bulgaria. After 1975 the species began to moving west-wards and populating the towns and villages in the interior of the country (Figure 1). Since 1979 the Herring Gull has no longer nested in the cities of Tolbuchin, Silistra and Plovdiv, since 1980, it has stopped nesting in Silver, and since 1981, in Pleven. Then there were about 4000 breeding pairs of Herring Gulls in Bulgaria, of which 2500 pairs bred on the roofs of the houses in the towns and villages near the sea, and the largest rock colony (772 pairs) was on the island of St. Ivan near the town of Sozopol (Nankinov 1981). Over the last decade Herring Gulls have bred in the following towns and villages: since 1982 - Vidin; 1984 - Aitos; 1985 - Pazardzik; 1986 - Razgrad; 1987 - Schumen, Ruse; 1988 - Michailovgrad; 1989 - Stara Zagora; 1990 - Yambol, Sofia; 1991 - Dunavci, Artchar, I.om, Kozloduj, Nikopol; 1992 - Popovo, Oriachovo, Svishtov (and probably in the village of Drenovez, in the district of Vidin - pers. com. D. Yordanov). In 1992 the breeding population of the Herring Gull in Bulgaria was 4274 pairs, of which 4081 pairs (95.5%) nested near the sea, and 193 pairs (4.5%)

on the houses in towns and villages in the interior of the country. Most Herring Gulls (2705 pairs - 63.3%) bred on the house roofs. 1969 pairs bred on rocks, i.e. 36.7% of the Bulgarian population of the species. All of the pairs breeding on rocks were on the Black Sea coast; P. Yankov and K. Niagolov, 1987 write that in 1984 one pair nested on rocks near Studen kladenez Reservoir in the Eastern Rhodopi mountains. The largest colony on St. Ivan island - 880 pairs.

We suppose that in the future the Herring Gull will continue to populate the towns and villages in the interior of Bulgaria, especially near the rivers Danube, Mariza (Evros), Tundza, Iskar etc., and that its population in the interior will increase rapidly.

## References

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