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Forum: Comments on the short article Tucakov, M. (2002): A case of late breeding of the Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* in northwestern Voivodina (Serbia). Acrocephalus 23 (112): 97-98.

Razprava: Komentarji na članek TUCAKOV, M. (2002): Primer poznega gnezdenja črne štorklje *Ciconinna Nigra* v severozahodni Vojvodini. Acrocephalus 23 (112): 97-98.

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We have been monitoring the Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* population in the lower Hungarian valley of the river Danube (from the throat of Sió channel to the southern border of Hungary), and we consider the Danube floodplains as a continuous habitat, regardless of the country borders from the Sió throat down to Kopački rit and Apatin. Reading the article of Marko Tucakov we would like to add a few thoughts on the subject of late breeding, food supply and reproduction success of the Black Stork.

1. It is interesting that Tucakov, based on data from literature, times the laying, hatching and fledging on average 3-4 weeks later than we do. In our 10-years of experience in the Gemenc region, laying takes place at the end of March or beginning of April, hatching in the first half of May – we have several times seen young in the first week of May. Fledging takes place in the first half of July on average. The earliest proven fledging in Gemenc took place on July 11th, and the latest on September 2nd. In our experience, even those young which are already able to fly often stay on and around the nest until the beginning of August, and the adults still feed them. It has also happened that young Black Storks left the nest and then, some days after, they were back on the nest again.

2. Black Storks may often fly 10, even 15, km from the nest site, if the closest Suitable feeding place are dry. There is, for example, a regularly occupied nest near Vaskút, 10 km from the floodplain, with dry sand all around. There were 5 young in it in 2000. There was very heavy precipitation in the beginning of 2000, resulting in a number of agricultural problems. There was also a rather high flood wave on the river Danube before the breeding season, so wet feeding places could remain, although possibly hard to find. We have also quite frequently observed Black Storks crossing the river for food.

3. We found a negative effect of heavy rainfall on the reproduction success of the Black Stork in 2001. There was a very rainy period not long after hatching, when the young were still lying in the bottom of the nests (they were too young to stand). The bottom of the nests is typically filled with soil and mosses, very dense and quite hard, so water remains in it. Many young died, according to our theory because they had to lie in the water for a week or even more in relatively cold weather. Of course there is no proof, just that there was no other visible reason to account for the dead chicks found in such nests.

4. From 1992 to 2002 (11 years) the lowest yearly average number of young per nest in the Gemenc area (the floodplain between Sió throat and Báta) was 2.4 (in 1998) and the highest 4.1 (in 2000), while the mean number of young for the 11 years was 3.0.

5. In the article mentioned by Tucakov [Kalocsa, B. & E. Tamás (1996): Nesting of Black Storks in the Gemenc floodplain forest. IInd International Conference on the Black Stork, Trujillo, Spain] we certainly wrote that Black Storks often build a new nest due to human disturbance, but we have no proof of nesting in such a "new nest" in the same year they leave the "old one". This is not to mean it cannot be so, of course.

Altogether we agree with Tucakov that the breeding recorded by him was indeed late. We also agree that it is difficult to determine the reasons; whether, for example, it was due to human disturbance or to failed previous breeding attempts.