

## FIRST BREEDING OF THE YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus cachinnans michabellis* IN THE KARST

### Prvo gnezdenje rumenonogega galeba *Larus cachinnans michabellis* na Krasu

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Nidifications by Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* on buildings are not new in Europe. Nesting on buildings was first documented on the Bulgarian Black Sea shores in 1894 (NANKINOV 1992) and is now diffused in the Mediterranean basin (Barcelona, Rome, Genoa, Istanbul); in northern Europe the same behaviour is observed in Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* with urban colonies in France, Germany and above all England (CRAMP 1971, MONAGHAN *et al.* 1979, VINCENT 1988).

In Trieste, the nesting population has rapidly increased since the first pair was found in 1987 (BENUSSI *et al.* 1993): 68 pairs were counted in 1992, 155 in 1996, and 299 in 2000; breeding pairs use now every kind of rooftop (and even cranes, flower-pots and meadows) and are getting increasingly used to the presence of man. Two nests of the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans michabellis* were located in the Karst, not far from Trieste, during summer 1999. One was found on June 27<sup>th</sup> on a tiled roof in Sesana (Sežana - Slovenia) where a 40 days old *pullus* was observed together with adults. A second nest, with three 45 days old *pulli* ready to fly, were located on July 14<sup>th</sup> in Villa Opicina (Trieste), on a horizontal roof covered with pebbles and grass. Both in Sežana and Villa Opicina other adults as well as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> summer individuals were seen in flight. During 2000, the two nesting pairs were watched on a regular basis during the entire breeding season, and data on their breeding success, presence of other gulls and food availability were collected. Both pairs nested on the same site using the very same cup; in Sežana there was one chick that did not fledge (possibly due to predation), in Villa Opicina two chicks were hatched and successfully flew away in the first week of July.

Small flocks of adults and immatures were always present in both places (5.5 on average in Opicina, 2.6 in Sežana). Main food source appeared to be a dump in Slovene territory, located 2.5 km from Sežana, and 6 km from Villa Opicina, where flocks of 20-30 Yellow-legged Gulls (and up to 120), probably from Trieste, were repeatedly observed; yet again, food was

most likely found in garbage cans, the same as in Trieste (BENUSSI & BEMBICH 1998, BEMBICH 1998), or was brought to the chicks from the city.

The two nidifications confirm, in the Yellow-legged Gull breeding site choice, the importance of close food sources (PERCO *et al.* 1986), whereas land typology (in this case woods, small meadows and cultivated patches) seems not to be important if a safe place for the nest can be found; they also correspond to the spreading of the urban colony in Trieste, where many isolated pairs have been located during the last few years, for example in southern suburban areas.

### Summary

The first two nests of the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans michabellis* were located in the Karst during the summer of 1999. Data about their presence, breeding success and food availability were collected during 2000. The two breeding pairs probably came from Trieste, where a large colony is present. In the urban area, *L. c. michabellis* is increasing in numbers (68 pairs in 1992, 155 in 1996, 299 in 2000) and shows high breeding success, i.e. between 50% and 74%. The main food sources are refuse found by garbage cans, fish offal and left-overs.

### Povzetek

Poleti 1999 sta bila na Krasu odkriti prvi dve gnezdi rumenonogega galeba *Larus cachinnans michabellis*, leta 2000 pa je avtor članka zbiral podatke o galebovi gnezditveni uspešnosti in razpoložljivosti hrane. Gnezdeča para po vsej verjetnosti izvirata iz Trsta, kjer gnezdi večja kolonija teh galebov. V urbanih območjih se gostota rumenonogega galeba vztrajno povečuje (68 parov leta 1992, 155 parov leta 1996 in 299 parov leta 2000), hkrati pa se povečuje tudi njegova gnezditvena uspešnost, t.j. med 50% in 74%. Galebov glavni vir hrane so različni organski odpadki ob smetnjakih in ribja mrhovina.

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Prispelo / Arrived: 6.6.2002

Sprejeto / Accepted: 1.3.2002