

OCCURRENCE OF PYGMY CORMORANTS IN THE TISZA FLOOD AREAS AT CSONGRÁD—HÓDMEZŐVÁSÁRHELY

I. STERBETZ

Hungarian Ornithological Institute

(Received December 9th 1971)

Abstract

Some decades ago, the Pygmy Cormorant was but a rare hatching species in Hungary. Of late years, in the lower Tisza Region in the Southern part of Hungary, there have comparatively often appeared some of its errant individuals or those rendering probable its nesting here. The author is discussing the possibilities of a conceivable regression, summerizing the data collected.

Pygmy Cormorants *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* (PALL. 1773) are at present diffused in the triangle of Belgrade — Greece — Asia Minor in the Eurasian Continent. In Hungary, this species is considered as an extreme rarity, its occasional occurrences have, therefore, always been followed with attention.

The data of their observation may reckon not only on the interest that is due to the rare bird. As in the course of their invasion in north-western direction several southern bird species were spreading over Central Europe in the last decades, the question may be raised on this occasion, too, whether or not the Pygmy Cormorant is going to change its areal borders. This supposition is reasonable so much the more because it was nearly a century ago native even much more northerly than its present areas of diffusion are. Thus in the eighteen-seventies it nested in the marsh at Ecsed, as well (LOVASSY 1931). We have found a still more striking datum in the unpublished manuscript of BERTALAN BODNÁR according to whom: "...this species regularly nested in the Tisza inundation area at Vásárhely. I found its nest in 1901 for the last time when I even collected three eggs from it".

After what had gone before, in the decade between 1960 and 1969, I recorded on fourteen occasions the occurrence of Pygmy Cormorants along the Tisza between Csongrád and Hódmezővásárhely:

1960: Island at Körtvélyes, May 9th, 2 exemplars; Zsup-island at Csongrád, August 18th, 1 exemplar; Sasér, September 18th, 1 exemplar;

1962: Csongrád, May 1st, 1 exemplar;

1963: Sasér, April 7th, 1 exemplar;

1964: Sasér, June 8th, 2 exemplars in the heronry of the nature conservation area. At the same place, on June 30th, I again observed one exemplar.

1965: Sasér, between 15 and 20 of March, an exemplar was observed on the backwater round the reservation on more occasions.

1967: Sasér, between 10 and 15 January one exemplar was to be seen daily.

1969: Sasér, January 1st, one exemplar; in the „Barci” meadow at Hódmezővásárhely, on May 22nd, there were two Pygmy Cormorants flying in couple in the heronry at Kollantó. One of the birds took a green twig in its bill. At the same place, on June 18th, I observed two exemp-

lars flying similarly in couple over the heronry. On July 28th, both birds were to be seen again, a few hundred meters away from the previous site of observation. At last, a single Pygmy Cormorant flew over the „Barci”-meadow on August 21st.

Comparing my data that are condensed into a thought — provokingly narrow time cross-section with the observations published periodically in the continuous volumes of the journal *Aquila*, it is remarkable that the occurrences discussed above and the secular formation of the data originating from the parts of this country lying more northerly are thoroughly different from each other. In the other regions of the country, the Pygmy Cormorant is almost exclusively a winter guest, in the flood area of the southern Tisza, however, it occurred mostly in the nesting period. Nesting is made probable by the behaviour of the birds observed in couples in the springs of 1964 and 1969, as well. These suppositions are strongly confirmed by VERTSE's publication (1966) who saw two Pygmy Cormorants flying in couple under similar conditions in the Kőrös flood area at Szarvas—Halásztelek, in the spring of 1963.

However inspiring my short collection of data is, it would be early for the time being to express an opinion on it; its summary was, however, anyway timely. If it was erroneous to suppose the nesting that seems to be probable, the data of the occurrences of this rare species are, at any rate, valuable contributions to the body of knowledge of the fauna in the Tisza valley. If, however, this spread takes actually place in the near future, then this earliest manifestation of the dynamism of the Pygmy Cormorant may furnish a starting point to our later investigations.

References

- BODNÁR, B. (—): Hódmezővásárhely madárvilága (Avifauna of Hódmezővásárhely). — MS in the János Tornyai Museum at Hódmezővásárhely, dated from 1928.
- LOVASSY, S. (1931): Az Ecsedi-láp és madárvilága (The marsh at Ecsed and its avifauna) — Budapest.
- NIETHAMMER, G. (1951): Arealveränderungen und Bestandsschwankungen mitteleuropäischer — Vögel. *Bonner Zool. Beitr.* 17—53.
- VERTSE, A. (1966): Pygmy Cormorant nesting in Hungary. — *Aquila* 1964—65. 71—72, 239.