Migration Count of Steppe Eagle at Thoolakharka Watch Site, Nepal

УЧЁТ СТЕПНОГО ОРЛА НА ПРОЛЁТЕ В ТУЛАХАРКЕ, НЕПАЛ

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Steppe Eagle (Aquila nipalensis) is a globally endangered species that breeds at high latitudes of Palearctic and winters in Africa and Indian subcontinent. Migration count from bottleneck sites along the flyways is an appropriate method to monitor population of this species and other migrating raptors. In 2012–2015, we carried out autumn migration count at Thoolakharka raptor migration watch site along the foothills of Annapurna Himalayan Range of Nepal to investigate population dynamics of migrating Steppe Eagle. Each year, migration of Steppe Eagle started from the first week of October and continued throughout the count until 8 of December. Every year, we observed high fluctuation in the total number of migrating Steppe Eagles that ranged between 8 684 (in 2013) to 4 302 (in 2015). Similar results were observed in the proportion of juveniles (first year bird) 23.7% to 17.6%, subadults (2nd to 4th year) 44.8% to 33.6% and adults (≥ 5th year) 48.8% to 34.9%. High fluctuation in the total count and the proportion of age groups could have two possible reasons: 1) the actual change in population over different years and 2) changes in the actual migration route eagles follow depending on the local or regional weather conditions. For these reasons, we could not ascertain that the population of migrating Steppe Eagle at Thoolakharka watch site is actually declining. Therefore, we stress a long term monitoring of migrating Steppe Eagle population from Thoolakharka watch site in the future to investigate the real changes in population.