Annual Movements of Two Steppe Eagles, and Their Use of Rubbish Dumps in Arabia During the Winter

ЕЖЕГОДНЫЕ ПЕРЕМЕЩЕНИЯ ДВУХ СТЕПНЫХ ОРЛОВ И ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ИМИ СВАЛОК ВО ВРЕМЯ ЗИМОВОК НА АРАВИЙСКОМ ПОЛУОСТРОВЕ

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We tracked two young Steppe Eagles (Aquila nipalensis) that wintered in Oman during 2016–2017. In spring 2017 one bird travelled over 3700 km around the head of the Arabian Gulf, and summered in far western Kazakhstan. During the summer it made sometimes long excursions (>1500 km). Beginning on 2 October, it migrated more than 2500 km south and settled for the winter 2017–18 in central Saudi Arabia, where it remained until 27 March, when it started its spring migration back to Kazakhstan. The other bird flew over 5300 km to 2017 summering grounds in NW Kazakhstan. It wandered somewhat between Kazakhstan and Russia for the summer, then in early September travelled over 4500 km and spent its the winter in SW Saudi Arabia, near the Yemen border. On 8 March 2018 it started to migrate back to Kazakhstan. Neither bird summered in the same areas in both years; summering areas in 2018 were hundreds of km away from those in 2017.

Both birds were caught on rubbish dumps in Oman, and wintered in Saudi Arabia on rubbish dumps. The rubbish dump that serves Salalah, in southern Oman, is regularly used by a thousand Steppe eagles every day, and on some days counts have exceeded 2000. Colour ringed Steppe Eagles and Eastern Imperial Eagles (Aquila heliaca) from nests in Russian and Kazakhstan have been observed at rubbish dumps in Arabia. Rubbish dumps, particularly in Arabia, are providing abundant food for scavenging birds of prey, and may be affecting the pattern of wintering.