

Albania – National Report on Great Bustard - *Otis tarda*

Prepared by the Ministry of Environment

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Historical data

The Great Bustard is a very rare **wintering/migratory** bird in Albania. Till some years ago the species was considered as extinct since no data on its presence were collected for circa 30 years. In fact during the last two years (2002 and 2003), a few individuals were reported being present during migration in two sites of Albania (*see* Fig. 1.) in Bedati (Karavasta) and Kopliku (Shkodra). Data on those two areas correspond also with those from Lamani & Puzanov (1962). According to those authors, the Great Bustard was in the 60s' wintering in small quantities in the lowland areas.



*Figure 1. Identified migrating/wintering areas (in black) of Great Bustard *Otis tarda* in Albania*

Distribution

The sites where the species have been recently observed are semi-arid areas, tree-less plains with the predominance of grass.

- ✓ Bedati (Karavasta) is a former marshland area turned in the 70's in agricultural land. Today agriculture is abandoned do to high concentrations of salinity. The area is now used by locals as pasture area.
- ✓ Kopliku is the only semi-desert habitat of Albania (see Fig. 2). Agriculture is present only in few parts of the plain. The other areas maintain its natural shape, semi-arid grassland.



Figure 2. View from Kopliku area (Shkodra) – Wintering/migrating habitat for the Great Bustard Otis tarda

Threats

The main threatening factors are :

1. **Hunting** - (two individuals were killed during the last two years)- **high**
2. **Habitat degradation** – habitats in lowland areas are diminished due to the abandon of arable land. Those habitats are now evolving versus more closed type of habitats such as scrubs. - **medium**
3. **Uncontrolled development** – Habitats are more and more subject of uncontrolled developments such as roads, constructions etc. That phenomenon is particularly evident in Kopliku area. - **low**

4. **Disturbance** – All the potential habitats are severely disturbed by pastoralists -
high

Conservation Measures

The species is not mentioned in the Albanian Red Data Book (1998). During last years, its status has been revised and as a result the Great Bustard is considered as Critically Endangered.

The Great Bustard has already been included in the Albanian list of strictly protected species (Law on Wild Fauna and Hunting, No. 7875 dated 23.11.1994). Despite its protection the implementation of the law on hunting remains very weak. As stated above two individuals have been killed during the last two years. No other conservation measures concerning either the species or its habitats have been undertaken so far.

With the new law on biodiversity protection that is waiting for approval in the Parliament, there are more chances from the legal point of view to add more requirements to different inspectorates on the protection of the species.