

The Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* in the Black Sea Nature Reserve

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The Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* is not a numerous nesting species in the Black Sea Nature Reserve (Ardamatskaya 1984). However, it breeds on all the islands except the Yegypetsky Islands. This paper gives some basic information about numbers and productivity.

The maximum number on the Konskiy Islands in Yagorlytskiy Bay (Figure 1) is 15-17 breeding pairs (Rudenko 1990) with 25 - 31 pairs on the islands of

Tendrovskiy Bay. The total Oystercatcher population in the reserve consists of about 35-40 pairs. Numbers on the Konskiy Islands fluctuate between 10 and 18 pairs (Figure 2a). The number of pairs on the islands of Tendrovskiy Bay are more variable. In 1986-1987 there were only five pairs, compared with about 31 pairs in 1989. In 1991 the number of Oystercatchers decreased to 15 pairs (Figure 2b).

In general, Oystercatchers nest on the elevated dry, sandy parts of the islands. Rarely, they nest in small

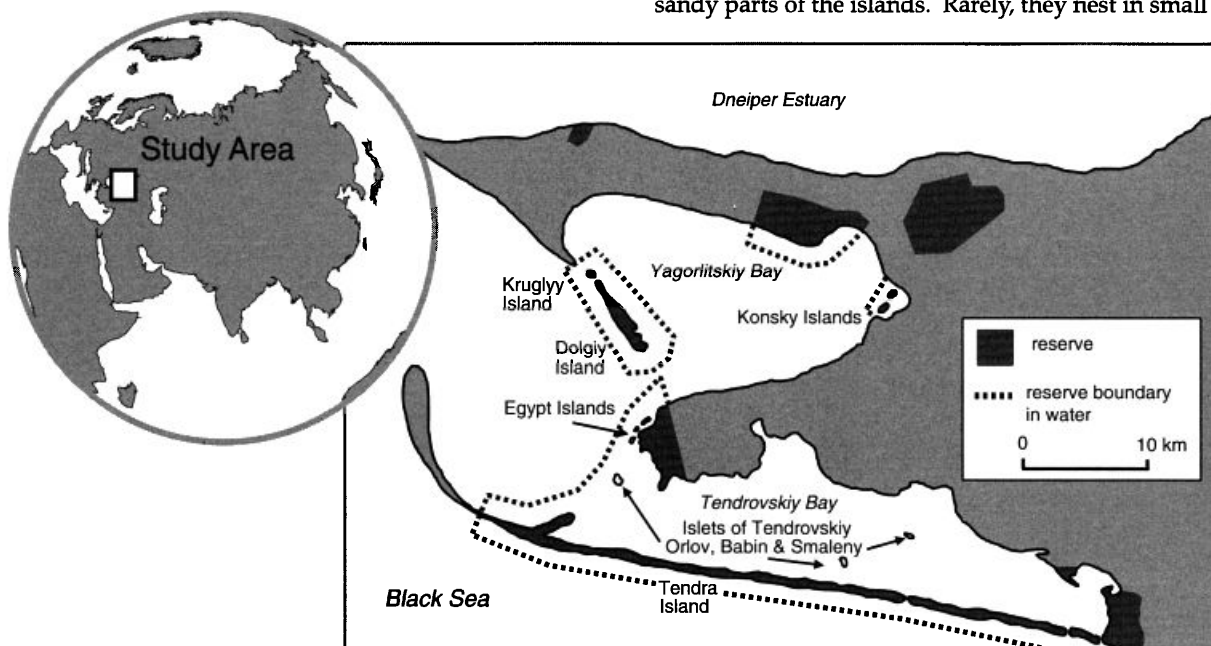


Figure 1. The region of the Black Sea Nature Reserve.

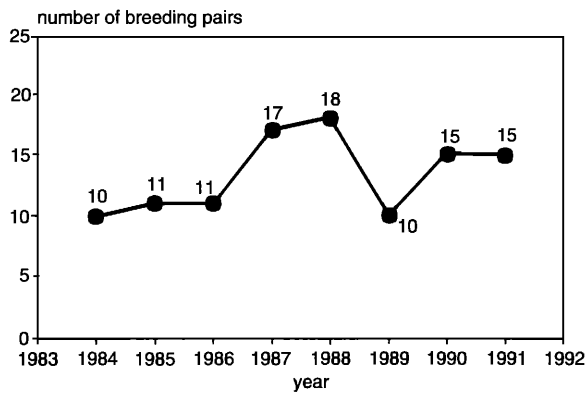


Figure 2a. Changes in the number of breeding pairs of Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* in Yagorlytskiy Bays in the Black Sea Nature Reserve.

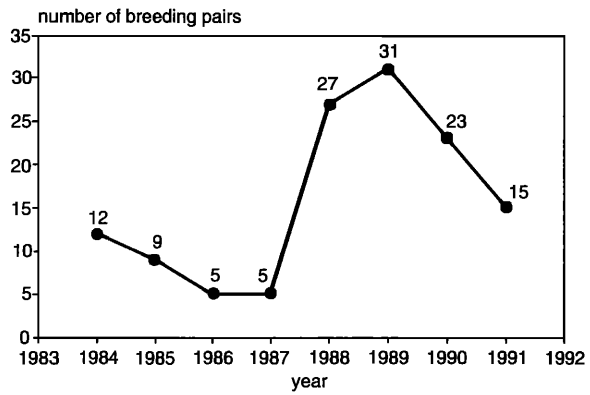


Figure 2b. Changes in the number of breeding pairs of Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* on the islets of Tendrovskiy Bay in the Black Sea Nature Reserve.

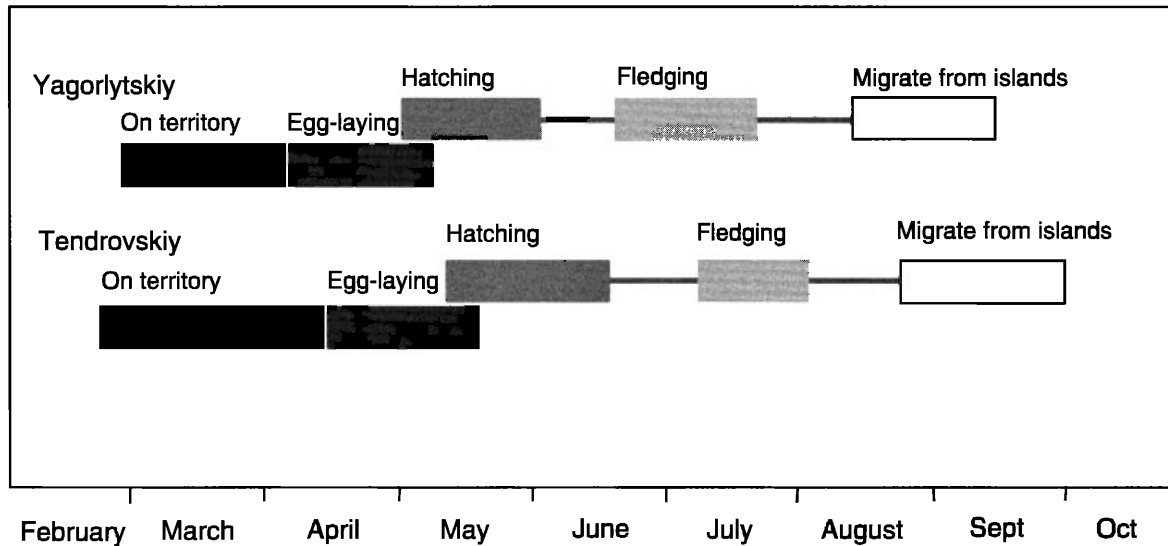


Figure 3. Breeding chronology in Oystercatcher on the islets of Yagorlytskiy and Tendrovskiy Bays in the Black Sea Nature Reserve.

depressions covered with halophytous plants.

The average date of arrival is 15 March (n=8 years). Egg-laying takes place on 16-20 April at Yagorlytskiy Bay and on 6-12 April at Tendrovskiy Bay (Figure 3). The differences in mean clutch size between Yagorlytskiy and Tendrovskiy Bays is not significant (Table 1). Egg-mortality varied in different years from 11.1% to 63.6% (Table 2). In the post-breeding period, Oystercatchers migrate to Tendra Island. The number recorded was

equivalent to 15-50 individuals (July-August 1988) and 7-10 individuals (1990) on a 5 km survey route. By September, only single individuals remained (Table 2).

The main factors influencing productivity in the Nature Reserve are probably the high water level in the Bays and predation by Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachians*.

Table 1. Mean clutch size of Oystercatchers in Yagorlytskiy and Tendrovskiy Bays (Black Sea Nature Reserve)

Year	Clutch Size		n
	Yagorlytskiy Bay	Tendrovskiy Bay	
1984	3.5	-	-
1985	3.2	-	-
1986	3.3	-	-
1988	3.6	3.3	27
1989	3.8	3.0	31
1990	3.6	3.7	23
1991	3.6	3.1	15

Table 2. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachians* predation of Oystercatcher nests on the Konskiy islands (Yagorlytskiy Bay, Black Sea Nature Reserve) in 1984-1991.

Data	1984	1985	1986	1988	1989	1990	1991
No. nests recorded	10	11	11	18	10	15	15
No. nests predated	4	7	2	2	4	3	4
% nest predation	40.0	63.6	18.1	11.1	40.0	20.0	25.0

Table 3. The number of Oystercatchers per 5 km transect on Tendra Island during migration in 1989-1990 (the Black Sea Nature Reserve).

Month	Number of counts n	Total number of birds per count		WADERS				OYSTERCATCHERS			
		Min	Max	number per 5 km transect		% of all species		number per 5km transect		% of all species	
				Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
March	2	227	315	13	14	5.7	4.4	10	13	3.6	4.1
April	3	127	330	19	67	14.9	20.3	7	45	2.9	35.4
July	4	284	744	12	90	4.2	12.1	1	13	0.1	4.6
August	5	233	650	10	107	4.3	16.5	1	6	0.2	2.6
September	3	578	1120	12	74	2.1	6.6	0	2	-	0.2
October	4	217	7487	55	3.2	7.4	0	1	-	0.1	

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