

# Report on nesting of the Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* in central Europe

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The Czech Republic is a small country in central Europe. Of 13 nesting wader species recorded, five occur only irregularly or rarely. Breeding habitat for species such as Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* has deteriorated during the last few decades due to agricultural intensification. However, Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus*, which nest in forested areas 150–700m above sea level, still have areas of suitable breeding habitat.

The Czech Republic lies close to the south-western limits of the distribution of the species in Europe. Some individuals overwinter at waterbodies that have not frozen over (Figure 1). At the end of March and beginning of April, the birds return from their wintering grounds. Until the beginning of May, birds migrate through the Czech Republic to more northerly breeding grounds. During this period, local residents perform flight displays above the forest breeding and wetland feeding territories. Some breeding grounds resemble those in northern Europe (Figure 2) but some birds nest in agricultural areas.

The Green Sandpiper does not build its own nest. The female lays her eggs in the abandoned nests of other birds, mostly thrushes ( Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Blackbird *T. merula*, Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus*) and crows (Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*) (Figures 3 & 4). Usually during the second day after hatching the chicks jump to the ground from the nest (Figure 5). The parents lead them through the forest to a feeding territory, which is usually on the bank of a small forest brook (Figure 6) or on the shores of a shallow pond covered with thick vegetation, most often reed-mace *Typha* sp. (Figure 7). The chicks respond to the warning calls of the parents by taking cover (Figure 8). After several days, the female leaves the family and the young remain in the care of the male until they become independent. Young birds are able to fly for short distances at the age of 18 to 20 days (Figure 9). Immediately after breeding, the adult Green Sandpipers moult their flight and tail feathers on their reneesting sites (settling ponds of sugar factories and similar locations). In central Europe, autumn migration of northern populations peaks in August.



Figure 1: Green Sandpiper wintering site, east Bohemia.





**Figure 2:** Green Sandpiper breeding site in the Protected Landscape Area Trébonsko, south Bohemia.



**Figure 3:** A female Green Sandpiper incubates a clutch of eggs in an old Blackbird's nest.





**Figure 4:** A site where a pair of Green Sandpipers successfully bred in an old Carrion Crow's nest 20.5m high in a spruce tree.





**Figure 5:** A 20-hour-old chick shortly after jumping from the nest.

**Figure 6:** A typical feeding territory.





**Figure 7:** Growth of reed-mace where the chicks take cover.



**Figure 8:** A four-day-old chick hidden in grass.



**Figure 9:** A 19-day-old fledgling which can already fly.

