2012: Record-breaking season for Spring Alive!

Title

With the arrival of summer, the 7th season of the Eurasian Spring Alive programme has been completed, characterised by the breaking of a new record and a technological innovation. The campaign now moves to Africa where from September onwards, participants will celebrate the arrival of spring with bird-watching and other bird-related activities. At least seven African countries will newly join the Birdlife's Spring Alive campaign: Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Nigeria.

This spring, in the European and Central Asian region, a record-breaking number of 161,111 observations were recorded (34,889 more than last year). Russia scored the highest number of observations: 80,328! They share the podium with Italy (51,144) and Poland (6,476).

The project's website www.springalive.net was visited by more than 93,000 people-the highest number ever. Moreover, the Spring Alive family has never had so many participating countries: for the first time ever, the 2012 campaign had over 40 !

The BirdLife Partners participating in the project organised many bird and bird-watching activities to share their passions, increase their popularity, educate and raise people's awareness of bird conservation.

So what was the breakdown of the Spring Alive bird observations?

Similarly to last year, the Barn Swallow was the bird seen most frequently (35% of the observations); the Common Swift was reported in 30% of the observations; the Common Cuckoo arrived in third position (23%) whilst the White Stork placed fourth (8%). The Eurasian Bee-eater, the rarest species recorded during Spring Alive, was only seen by 5% of the participants.

This year Spring Alive innovates with "bird TV". For the first time, everyone interested could follow the fortunes and everyday habits of two Swift families via live webcams at www.springalive.net in the "About Birds" section. A live webcam feed from two nest boxes in the Hans-Hermann School, Germany, has been transmitting the day to day lives of two Swift families since 2006. Now the Martinet and Herrmann families will be followed outside of their nests by Sping Alive fans.

The Spring Alive campaign is gaining more and more popularity. The growing enthusiasm and interest in the project is reflected not only in the overall number of observations, but also in the enlargement of the list of participating countries and a greater audience reached. BirdLife Europe hopes that this interest will result in young people being more sensitive to the protection of birds and nature conservation. For more information please contact Karolina Kalinowska, International Spring Alive Coordinator at OTOP (BirdLife in Poland).