

Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*) – a New Breeding Species of a Mixed Heronry at Dragoman Marsh, Western Bulgaria

*Krassimir Hristov*¹, *Peter Shurulinkov*^{2*}, *Andrey Ralev*¹, *Ivailo Zafirov*³

¹ Balkani Wildlife Society, Sofia, Tsanko Tserkovski St., 67A; Bulgaria; E-mail: hristov_k@abv.bg

² Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1000 Sofia, 1, Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., Bulgaria;
E-mail: shurulinkov@mail.bg

³ “Rhodope” Project, 1000 Sofia, Graf Ignatiev, 7A, Bulgaria; E-mail: ivailo.zafirov@rodope.org

Abstract: On 28 June 2007 a nest of Great White Egrets with four juveniles in it was discovered in the reed mas-sifs of the Dragoman marsh, Western Bulgaria. Between 3 and 5 pairs of Great White Egrets, 5-8 pairs of Purple Herons and one pair of Grey Herons were breeding in a loose colony in the northern part of the marsh. The colony was discovered for the first time in 2006, but it was formed only by Purple Herons. Thus the Dragoman Marsh is the only breeding site of the Great White Egret in Bulgaria apart from the Srebarna Lake and it is very important place for the conservation of the species on national level. Until now breeding of the Great White Egrets was not reported for inland parts of Bulgaria apart from the Dan-ube River course.

Key words: Herons, Egrets, breeding colony, Great White Egret, first breeding case, Dragoman