

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSERVATION OF HERONRIES IN GREECE

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During the last decade all heronries in Greece were surveyed once or twice in order to record nesting species and numbers. Herons (Ardeidae), Cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae), Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* and Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (Threskiornithidae) nested in 49 heronries. Most of these (26) were monospecifics mostly with Grey heron *Ardea cinerea* (17) while mixed heronries included two to nine species. The majority of heronries were distributed in central and northern Greece and five were on islands all close to the mainland. At least 26 heronries including 13,145 pairs (87.5% of the total breeding population) were distributed in Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Heronries were situated on trees (30), reedbeds (9) and bushes (9). The trees were mostly poplar *Populus* sp., pine tree *Pinus* sp., alder *Alnus glutinosa*, plane tree *Platanus orientalis* and willow *Salix* sp. Bushes consisted mostly of tamarisks *Tamarix* spp. while reedbeds of common reed *Phragmites australis*. At least 13 additional bird species were recorded nesting within or very close to 16 heronries. These were passerines (seven species), waterbirds (two), Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Yellow-legged gull *Larus michahellis*, Long-eared owl *Asio otus* and Little bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*. At least 28 heronries had a nesting population less than 100 pairs, twelve between 100 and 1000, three between 1001 and 2000 and one more than 5000. The maintenance of extensive reedbeds in lakes and tree stands in agricultural land close to wetlands and in SPAs will contribute to the conservation of heronries.