

**BRIEF REVIEW OF RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE LITERATURE
ON THE GYRFALCON (*FALCO RUSTICOLUS*)**

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ABSTRACT.—About 50% of the world range of the Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) is in Russia, with the highest density in the southern Yamal, and the largest numbers located in Kamchatka. The main source of information on Russian Gyrfalcons is the monograph “Gyrfalcons” by Dementiev, published in 1951 and later translated into German and English. Analysis of Russian literature on the Gyrfalcon for the second half of the 20th Century was undertaken by E. Potapov and R. Sale in their joint monograph “The Gyrfalcon,” published by Poyser in 2005. In the mid-1990s, I prepared for the company of Dr. Nick Fox an annotated bibliography in English on the Gyrfalcon in the territory of the ex-USSR, available free upon request. The list includes 490 entries on 64 pages, predominantly in Russian, covering the period 1656–1995. The majority of entries include episodic observations during avifauna investigations of vast areas, and only 25 articles and species accounts are dedicated exclusively to the Gyrfalcon. Following the collapse of the USSR, visits to arctic regions declined, poaching developed, and long-term studies on the Gyrfalcon became almost impossible due to a shortage of funds. However, a number of important publications have appeared and are available, along with other information, on the Internet in both Russian and English. Most of the literature deals with breeding biology, descriptions of breeding sites, and other observations, whereas other aspects of biology and ecology are insufficiently studied. Absence of work on post-breeding movements, winter ecology and taxonomy is apparent. *Received 28 February 2011, accepted 28 June 2011.*

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RUSSIA ENCOMPASSES about 50% of the world’s Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) range. The main source of information on the Gyrfalcon in Russia was the monograph “Gyrfalcons” by Professor Georgiy P. Dementiev (1898–1969) published in 1951 and later translated into German and English (Demen-

tiev 1951, Dementiev 1960). Analysis of Russian literature on the Gyrfalcon for the second half of the 20th Century was undertaken by Dr. Eugene Potapov and Richard Sale in their joint monograph “The Gyrfalcon” published by Poyser in 2005.

In the mid-1990's, I prepared for the company of Dr. Nick Fox an annotated bibliography in English on the Gyrfalcon from the territory of the ex-USSR, available free upon request. The list included 490 entries on 64 pages predominantly in Russian, covering the period 1656–1995. The majority of entries include episodic observations during avifauna investigations of vast areas, and only 25 articles and species accounts were dedicated exclusively to the Gyrfalcon. Following the collapse of the USSR, visits to Gyrfalcon breeding areas declined, poaching came about, and long term studies on the Gyrfalcon were almost impossible to manage due to a shortage of funds. However a small number of important articles have appeared and are listed as follows: The Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* in the Lake Baikal Region by Ryabtsev (1997); Ecological bases and resettlement ways of the Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* in the tundra of the European part of Russia by Morozov (2000); Gyrfalcon in Yakutia: distribution, breeding ranges, feeding peculiarities by Labutin and Ellis (2006); Status and monitoring of the Peregrine and Gyrfalcon in the Kola Peninsula, Russia by Ganusevich (2006); Observations of the Gyrfalcon in Bulgaria by Nankinov (2007); Five fledglings of the Gyrfalcon on the Yamal Peninsula by Mechnikova and Kudryavtsev (2007); Materials on the Gyrfalcon population status in Kamchatka by Lobkov et al. (2007); and Gyrfalcon and Goshawk food in Lapland by Gilyazov et al. (2008). I translated the main articles on the Gyrfalcon from Russian into English for Dr. Tom Cade during 2000–2005, and they are available on request.

Additional data on the Gyrfalcon may be found in the Red Data Books of different administrative units of Russia, for example, the Murmansk Region (2003), Kamchatka (2006), Nenets District (2006), Magadan Region (Kolyma) (2008), Chukotka (2008), and others. A general review in the entire Red Data Book of the Russian Federation was produced by Dr. Sergei A. Ganusevich (2001), the hero of the recent documentary film “Ponoi Depres-

sion” about his work with raptors at the Ponoi depression at the Centre of the Kola Peninsula (<http://ruslapland.livejournal.com/17981.html>).

The quality of data in species accounts of the Gyrfalcon is quite variable. Several short communications are published in the express issues of the Russian Journal of Ornithology (only electronic versions of them are available at the Russian electronic library at www.elibrary.ru). This journal often reprints old articles, such as work by the late Professor Alexei V. Mikheev (1907–1999) (Mikheev 2002), originally published in 1941. Meteorological conditions and the general situation for Arctic breeding birds are regularly reflected on the pages of the electronic newsletter “Arctic Birds” (<http://www.arcticbirds.net/>). Some articles and short communications, especially on smuggling and poaching of the Gyrfalcon in Russia, are described in the Newsletter of the Middle-Eastern Falcon Research Group “Falco,” completely in English (<http://www.mefrg.org/falco.asp>), and in “Raptor Conservation,” which appears in Russian and English (<http://www.sibecocenter.ru/RC.htm>). Over several years, four new zoological journals were launched: the Altai Zoological Journal, the Baikalian Zoological Journal, the Amurian Zoological Journal, and the Far-Eastern Ornithological Journal (<http://birdland.ru/>). The Gyrfalcon stock held in captivity is reflected in the review tables published by EARAZA and the Moscow Zoo annually in the series “Birds of Prey and Owls in Zoos and Breeding Centers,” in Russian and English (<http://www.moscowzoo.ru/get.asp?id=C78>).

Good articles on breeding biology are known from the Kola Peninsula, the Bolshezemel'skaya tundra, the southern part of the Yamal Peninsula, Taimyr, Kolyma, and Kamchatka. Information on breeding biology and reports of episodic observations with descriptions of breeding sites dominate the literature, while other aspects of biology and ecology are insufficiently studied, but there is largely an absence of work on post-breeding movements,

winter ecology, and taxonomy. Poaching pressure was investigated only in Kamchatka (Lobkov et al. 2007). Analysis of fragmentary data on poaching (mainly seizures of smuggled birds at airports) on the basis of media sources is described in a series of publications by Nikolenko (2007, 2009), Nikolenko and Karyakin (2007), and Lyapustin (2008). Several works are devoted to the problem of Gyrfalcon mortality in traps set for Arctic Foxes (*Vulpes lagopus*) (Ellis 1993, Glenn 1993, Gavrillov 2007). In 1987, the Lithuanian team of P. Abukiavichius, G. Grazhuliavichius, and A. Baronas made a 19-minute documentary film “In Search of the White Gyrfalcon,” made at the Kolyma River mouth in the Russian Far East (<http://www.getmovies.ru/details.aspx?item=94632>).

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