

NOTES * LÜHITEATED

Late breeding in Magpie (Pica pica)

In Estonian conditions, the Magpie (*Pica pica*) breeds once a year, starting trimming old nests and building new ones as early as in late March- early April, and in early May there are full clutches in most of the nests. As a rule, young start to fledge at the end of May, and during the first half of June all fledgling have leaved the nest. In view of that, witnessing a hatch of two flightless chicks, taken care by two old birds, was even more surprising. The brood was found in lilacs surrounding a farmyard in Tääksi, Viljandimaa, and chicks were ringed on July 19, 2009. Considering the fact, that incubation time of Magpie lasts 17–18 days, and that young spend in nests approximately 3 weeks, the couple had to start laying in the beginning of first decade of June – by the time, when most of the young Magpies have already become fledged or are at least halfway there. On the occasion of occurrence described above, there is no reason to suspect, that it was the second breeding. But even if this was a second clutch, then in Estonian conditions, it was still extraordinary late (though successful) breeding of Magpie.

Jaanus Aua

Blue Tit (Parus caeruleus) fledged from Great Tit's (Parus major) nest

During the field works at the Leipste village near Kilingi-Nõmme in 2009, the avian ecology study group of Tartu University, while checking the hatching of the Great Tits' eggs, found a considerably smaller fledgling from one of the nest-boxes. This clutch had 9 eggs, 6 of which hatched. At first this find did not attract much attention, for asynchrony of hatching in Great Tit's brood is quite common. When fledglings were eight days old, the asynchronous chick was still alive, but the question arouse, whether it is a chick of the Great Tit at all. While ringing the thirteen days old fledglings, there was no doubt, that this asynchronous fledgling is actually a Blue Tit (see the cover). Young Blue Tit weighted 12.6 g, while Great Tit's fledgling from the same nest weighted 17.4 g. At first members of the study group were baffled by such discovery – could it be hybrid of Great Tit and Blue Tit. Great Tit and Blue Tit have known to breed together and take care of the brood in certain circumstances, but there has never been observed any hybrids between these two species: the eggs have always fertilized by the male of the same species (Slagsvold *et al.* 2002, Proc. R. Soc. Lond. B. 269: 1449–1455). Thus, there was no reason to assume, that this was the hybrid of two different species of tits, and to make it even clearer, the appearance of this young was in every way identical to the Blue Tit's fledgling. Latter browsing of field work records revealed that before the Great Tit set breeding, the Blue Tit had begun laying eggs in the same nest-box. Later, the Blue Tit abandoned its clutch or was driven off by the Great Tit, who then laid its eggs among these of the Blue Tit. Accidentally, one of the Blue Tit's eggs also hatched.

Marko Mägi

About roosting flocks in Starling (Sturnus vulgaris)

According to the literature, adult starlings as well as fledged young pass the night (sometimes en masse) in reeds and willow thickets. But while there are still unfledged young in nests, the places to pass the night may vary drastically. On May 31, 2008, while watching the flight of

Woodcocks near Võhma in Viljandimaa, I noticed night gathering of Starlings, who assembled on the few pine trees on nearby clearing to pass the night. During almost 30 minutes time, small groups of birds from different directions gathered to their lodging, and about 100 specimen in all „colonized“ the tops of two, about 60–70 years old pine trees on the clearing. Whether such choice is due to lack of reed-beds or shrubbery in neighbourhood, is unknown. On June 3, 2008, I witnessed the same evening spectacle on clearing near Tõrvaaugu in Järvamaa, where ca 50 adult starlings, breeding probably somewhere in neighbourhood, gathered on several pine trees to pass the night.

Jaanus Aua