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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DENSITY OF PREDATORY BIRDS IN TWO SELECTED AREAS WITHIN THE PALAEARCTIC AND ORIENTAL REGIONS, NEAR MOSCOW AND DELHI

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Despite significant differences (geographical, climatic, faunistic, etc.) the selected areas have one common character: a high degree of anthropogenic alteration of territories. Both are highly populated industrial and agricultural regions of some 50,000 sq. km each.

The number of birds of prey in the Moscow area was estimated in 1958-59 and 1973 as: *Buteo buteo* 3,500 breeding pairs, *Accipiter nisus* 900, *Falco tinnunculus* 800, *Milvus migrans* 700, *Pernis apivorus* 500 and others (12 species) 1,200; total number 7,600 (roughly 7-10 thousand) or 15 pairs for 100 sq. km. In the Delhi area predatory birds were counted in 1967-71: *Gyps bengalensis* 71,500 breeding pairs (including 1,500 in towns), *Milvus migrans* 22,000 (10,000 in towns), *Neophron percnopterus* 12,500 (less than 500 in towns), *Elanus caeruleus* and *Butastur teesa* 5,000 each and others (11 species) 9,000; total number 125,000 (roughly 120-150 thousand) or 250 pairs per 100 sq. km.

The great quantitative difference between the populations is accompanied (or probably caused) by the significant difference in their quality as well. Three dominant species of both populations are entirely different ecologically; in the Moscow area Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel (70 per cent of the total number of raptors) are active predators, but in the Delhi area White-backed Vulture, Kite and Egyptian Vulture (85 per cent of the total population) are passive scavengers.

The population of birds of prey in the Delhi area absolutely (15-20 times!) outnumbers that of the Moscow area because food is abundant, a large part of it being in fact provided by man (garbage, carcasses of cattle, wild animals killed by traffic, etc.) and because of the traditional good-will of Indian people to wildlife including predatory birds. The above comparison leads to the presumption that nowadays in modern environments (anthropogenic in the main) the status at least of some wild populations might be determined by factors of social rather than natural characters.