

Sotnikov, V.N. 1999. from: Ptitsy Kirovskoi oblasti i sopredel'nykh territoriy [Birds of the Kirov Region and adjoining territories]. Nevorob'inye [Non-Passerines]. Part 1. Kirov, Triada-S Press. 432 p. Tabl.26. Fig.123. Bibliogr: 182 titles. In Russ.

Translated by Jevgeni Shergalin, edited by Oksana Lane

Red-throated Loon (RTLO) (*Gavia stellata* Pontoppidan, 1763).

Status. Rare passage species.

Distribution. Krulikovskiy recorded the RTLO in the south of Kirov Region only in flight [72]. Plesskiy also observed this species only on passage, and at the same time only in one of his early papers (1927) he describes the only record of a young bird on the autumn migration near Vyatka town (Kirov) [100]. However, he identified the bird incorrectly. The specimen, kept at the Kirov Regional Museum of Local Lore collection was identified by the Author as a young Black-throated Loon. In later publications (1955, 1957, 1976) Plesskiy does not mention this discovery and writes: “was observed only on the spring passage” [105, 108, 115]. Based on the specimen harvested on 28 May 1925 from the pond in Murashi settlement, Kozlova (1947) suggested, that this species “...to all probability, breeds here” [67], but the date and the site of this record completely exclude such suggestion, and this specimen should be from late-autumn.

During the entire history of ornithological investigations in the territory of the region nobody found RTLO's nests or broods [7, 105, 122]. Southern limit of its breeding range at the present time crosses to the north of Kirov Region – through the north of Vologda Region, in southern territory of Arkhangel'sk Region and Republic Komi (from Vychehga River to upper parts of Pechora River [150] – (Ill.2).

On the southern periphery of the breeding range RTLOs breed sporadically, irregularly and therefore for a long time their nesting was not confirmed for Perm Region as well [49, 168]. Not until 3 July 1988 in the north of this region (Chusovoe Lake) a brood was sighted [63]. Suggestion of Ruzskiy (1893) on the possible breeding southwards (Zveniga River in the former Cheboksary use of Kazan Province – now territory of Mari El) was based on summer observations (July) of one male (Cit. by [7]), which was either summering (probably, as a result of a spring injury), or the bird has begun departure too early.

Migration Period. The spring migration of the RTLO lasts awhile – based on the data by Plesskiy [105, 115] – it extends from 10 till 28 May. We recorded single birds on 15 May 1998, 23 May 1992 and 17 June 1994 in the fishing farm “Filippovka” (Kirovo-Chepetskiy district). In the last case the bird was flying away in the south-east direction. Probably, it was a nomadic (wandering), non-breeding individual. In Nizhegorodskaya Region the spring migration was observed from the end of April until the end of May [122]. In Tatarstan a pair of birds was recorded 7 May 1978[14]. During autumn migration in Kirov Region RTLO was recorded for the first time in 1996, when we harvested a single bird on 16 September in the fishing farm “Filippovka” (see “Systematics”).

In Nizhniy Novgorod Region in autumn (October) this species is registering more frequently than in the spring [32, 122]. In 1977 a single Loon was observed 4 October in the territory of Tatarstan [12, 14]. The fall migration terminates simultaneously with freezing-over.

Ill.2. Distribution of RTLO (*Gavia stellata*).

Summer records of non-breeding birds

Passage in spring

Passage in autumn

Southern border of the breeding range (by: Flint, V.E.).

Number. RTLOs are observed irregularly and by single individuals, because the major segment of the population bypass White Sea-Baltic Sea, and miss our region [51].

Natural habitats. For resting and feeding they stop over on large lakes, ponds, rivers.

Feeding. Mainly feed on small fish, occasionally on frogs, molluscs, aquatic invertebrates, for which they dive to the depth of 9 m, staying under water up to 90 sec. [15]. Sometimes they swallow parts of aquatic vegetation.

Enemies and limiting factors. On migration loons occasionally are shoot by hunters. Sometimes they perish while foraging by getting trapped in the fishing nets. During 70 years (1923-1993) in the territory of the Region no more than 4-5 RTLOs were harvested, and Popov (1976) writes: "...for the last 50 years not one specimen was bagged" [7]. In 14 years we examined only three specimens from the territory of Kirov Region.

Systematics. Out of two known subspecies of the RTLO through Volga-Kama Territory the widely distributed nominal bypassing form is— *G.s.stellata*. In the fishing farm "Filippovka" 16 September 1997 one specimen was harvested in breeding plumage: feathers on its back did not have white drop-shaped spots, and were surrounded by silver-grey edges. Such features are typical of the form *G.s.squamate*. *G.s.squamate*, distributed from the islands of Frants-Josef Land and Svalbard [143], to the territory of Kirov Region where it could have reached only as a vagrant bird. (Identification was checked by means of collection of Zool. Museum of Moscow State University and confirmed by Red'kin).

Literature: Ayupov et al. , 1980 [12], 1983 [14]; Vorontsov, 1967 [32]; Eremchenko, 1990 [49]; Karyakin, 1991 [63]; Kozlova, 1947 [67]; Krulikovskiy, 1913 [72]; Mineev, 1995 [51]; Plesskiy, 1927 [100], 1955 [105], 1957 [108], 1976 [115]; Popov, 1977 [7]; Puzanov et al., 1955 [122]; Stepanyan, 1990 [143]; Flint, 1982 [150]; [168].