

***Ciconia nigra* is circling over the A2 motorway**

The holiday season in full swing, thousands of Poles are moving along the motorways for their long-awaited holidays, while *ciconia nigra* is circling over them... Just relax. This name may not tell you much, but it means a black stork, much more rare than the white stork popular in Poland, and much more difficult to observe. The black stork, unlike its cousin, prefers to keep away from people and nests in deep forests.

The annual environmental monitoring of Autostrada Wielkopolska revealed at least two black stork nests near the motorway. Feeding birds have also been seen near the marshes in Torzym (Lubuskie Province).

- *The presence of the black stork is a good sign because it is a proof of healthy ecosystems. Where the black stork nests, greater biodiversity is found, including amphibians, reptiles and fish. The black stork can only prey on them if convenient habitats such as forest swamps, beaver dams or wet forests are found* - says prof. Piotr Tryjanowski from the University of Life Sciences in Poznań.

Considered a species sensitive to disturbance, black storks nest in quiet places, preferably in old forests, preferring at least 80-year-old trees. As they can sometimes cover more than 20 kilometers in search of food, they can be seen flying over the motorway. 80% of the A2 motorway in the Lubuskie section runs through forest areas, crossing Natura 2000 sites 3 times, and running along Natura 2000 sites in 3 places.

- *As part of environmental protection activities, we continuously monitor the motorway surrounding area and we know about at least 2 black stork nests in the vicinity, where birds come every year at the turn of March and April. Their breeding territories reach 150 square kilometers, flown around by a stork couple* - adds Dr. Ewa Patalas, Manager for Monitoring and Environmental Protection of Autostrada Wielkopolska.

In August storks begin to migrate, the migration culminating in September. When gliding in the air they often use warm air currents and can more easily be spotted circling over the motorway. The black stork used to be an extremely rare species, but its population has increased and remained stable at around 1,200 - 1,500 couples. However, *ciconia nigra* still needs to be protected, and being such a rare sight, offers a valuable and attractive opportunity not only for ornithologists, but also for drivers. As naturalists say: the black stork is a mystery, beauty and majesty all in one.

Autostrada Wielkopolska has been continuously monitoring the natural environment for:

- Passes for animals,
- Measurement of the chemical condition of water,
- Air purity,
- Condition of surface and ground waters,
- Water and sewage management and other

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