

The White Stork

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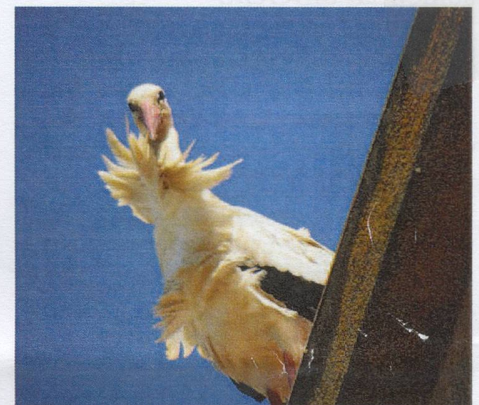
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FAUNA IN SWITZERLAND

The White Stork

The White Stork is a large wading bird, breeding in the warmer parts of Europe, northwest Africa, and southwest Asia. It is a strong migrant, wintering mainly in tropical Africa, down to the south of South Africa, and also in the Indian subcontinent.

land, storks take a detour, two narrow migration corridors: eastern storks cross the straits of Bosphorus to Turkey, traverse Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and then bypass the Sahara by following the Nile, while western ones fly through the straits of Gibraltar. Either way, the storks can



The White Stork is a huge bird, 100-125 cm tall, with a 155-200 cm wingspan and a weight of 2.3-4.5 kg. It is completely white except for the black wing flight feathers, and its red bill and legs, which are black on juveniles. It walks slowly and steadily on the ground. It flies with its neck outstretched.

Threats to the species include the drainage of wetlands and other agricultural intensification, collisions with overhead power lines, use of persistent pesticides, such as DDT to combat locusts in Africa, and (largely illegal) hunting on passage and in the wintering grounds. Some birds, known in German as Pfeilstorch ("arrow storks"), have been found in Europe with African arrows embedded in their bodies.

White Storks rely on movement between thermals of hot air for long distance flight, taking great advantage of them during annual migrations between Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. The shortest route south would take them over the Mediterranean, but since thermals only form over

get help from the thermals for almost the entire trip and thus save energy.

White Storks breed in open farmland areas with access to marshy wetlands, building a stick nest in trees, on buildings, or special platforms. Because it is viewed as bird of good luck, it is not persecuted, and often nests close to human habitation.

White Storks often form small colonies. They feed mainly on frogs and large insects, but also young birds, lizards and rodents.

The white stork is almost silent except for the noisy mutual bill-clattering when adults meet at the nest.

According to mythology, the 'stork' is responsible for bringing babies to new parents. This story probably came about because White Storks have a habit of nesting on buildings in urban areas, so they are often seen around human habitation.

Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians believe that storks bring harmony to a family on whose property they nest.