

# Bird Day at Riga Zoo – Tradition, Education and Conservation

## Tradition since 1952

The first Bird Day in Latvia was celebrated in 1928 when nest boxes were installed as part of Forest Day activities.

In 1952, the Ministry of Education of the Latvian Soviet Republic included Bird Day in school programs as a mandatory activity. Some of the nest boxes built in the 1950s were installed in the Don and Volga regions (Russia). During Soviet times, Bird Day at the Riga Zoo included bird ringing demonstrations, presentations, excursions etc.

Since 1996, the main Bird Day activity at the Riga Zoo is the Woodpecker Workshop (participants learn how to build nest boxes for wild birds). It has become very popular and has been adopted as an educational tool by other institutions (NGOs, local governments and schools). In 1998 a permanent exhibition was created with model nest boxes for cavity nesting species (tits, flycatchers, redstarts, sparrows, etc.), with instructions for each model.



## Educational objectives



Every year, we invite field biologists to the Woodpecker Workshop to present one flagship species they are working with. During the construction of nest boxes specific of the species and the researchers' presentation on the species, we provide information:

- How to correctly build and manage a nest box
- Bird ethology
- Principles of environmental management and tips for reducing human impact



Nest boxes for Tengmalm's owl, 2018

Riga Zoo invests 2000/3000 EUR a year to provide and prepare material for the nest boxes. The Education and Information Department of the Zoo organizes the event in collaboration with other Zoo departments (Transport, Construction, etc.).

Each spring Riga Zoo conducts an education campaign to raise public awareness and prevent owlets and other wild birds from being unnecessarily collected from the wild.

**NEATŅEM**

**BRĪVĪBU!**

Atraded pūciņus un čīvēkus nepalietiniet pūcēm, neiztīciet to un dodiet prom!

Visbiežāk sastopamā pūču suga Latvijā ir meža pūce. Pūces ola pēdējam uzreiz aprīta sākumā...

Un pēdē jau pēc pirmas olas izdēšanas, tāpēc mazulī ir dažāda vecuma.

Līgandu pamet praktiski vienlaicīgi. Lielākie jau rīdēs, mazie - vēl nē! Mazulī vēl ir kāpēļi pa zariem un mīcās lūkos.

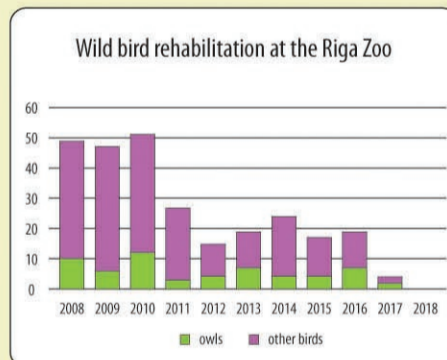
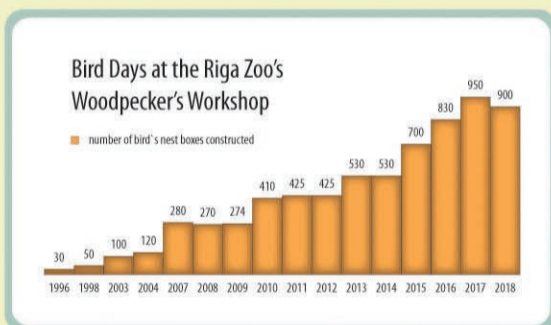
Pūcīti tiek baroti arī ārpus līgandas vēl vairākas nedēļas, vecāki tos atrod pēc spalgiņiem sauciena.

**LAUJ MĀCĪTES LĒDOT!**

**NEATŅEM BRĪVĪBU!**

An informative panel on the Latvian owl exhibit informs about basic first aid guidelines for "orphans" that have "fallen" from their nests. Since 2015, we have been posting this information on social networks in March and April.

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## Conservation

Since 2003, Bird Day focuses on particular (flagship) species chosen by researchers who conduct field studies on them. The nest boxes, designed specifically for each flagship species, are installed in several Latvian protected nature areas as part of conservation projects and study of the species. The most recent flagship species include:

Tengmalm's Owl (*Aegolius funereus*, 2018), Eurasian Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*, 2017), Forest Dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula Pallas*, 2015, 2016), Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*, 2014) and European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*, 2013).



Species	Nest boxes	% of occupation	Researcher
Tengmalm's Owl	95	(Data are being analyzed)	Avotins 2018
Eurasian Pygmy Owl	89	40%	Avotins 2017
Forest Dormouse*	170	—	Pilats 2015, 2016
Hoopoe	26	23%	Kerus 2014
European Roller	15	97%	Racinskis 2013

## Bird Day 2019 at Riga Zoo - flagship species: Ural Owl (*Strix uralensis*)

Bird Day 2019 will be organized on 30-31 March (Riga Zoo) and 6-7 April (Affiliate Ciruli). Ural Owl was chosen as flagship species as it is both a good biological indicator and a good umbrella species.

**Urālpūcei**  
*Strix uralensis*

1-3 km

7-12 m

- izvieto klajumu malā;
- būrim jābūt redzamam no attāluma;
- der iebērt dažas sauņas rupju skaidus;