



NESTING OF EIDER (*SOMATERIA MOLLISSIMA*) ON ISLANDS OF VALAAM AND ZAPADNYI ARCHIPELAGOES IN LAKE LADOGA

E.V. Agafonova¹, E.V. Mikhalyova², M.V. Sokolovskaya¹

¹*Leningrad Zoo, St. Petersburg, Russia;*

²*Valaam Archipelago Nature Park, Sortavala, Karelia, Russia*

Regular counts of nests and broods of Common Eider on the islands of Valaam Archipelago were conducted in May - August from 2003 to 2009. In addition, Eider nests were counted also on barren rocky islets near the Mekerikke Island (Zapadnyi (Western) Archipelago) in early June in the years 2006 – 2008.

Scant Eider nests (1 - 3 nests) are reported every year from most of Valaam Archipelago islands distant from major populated islands (Valaam and Skitskij); the total number of Eiders nesting on the islands of the archipelago in different years varied from 5 to 12 individuals. In cases when several birds nest on the same island, the nests are usually located at a considerable distance from each other. Two rocky islets near Mekerikke had nests of 28 birds in 2006 and 24 birds in 2007.

More than 90% of the nests detected on Valaam Archipelago islands and rocky islets near Mekerikke were located within colonies of Herring Gull and (much more rarely) Common Gull. The clutch size range from 2 to 5 eggs (mean – 3.75 ± 0.65). The time of hatching may vary widely within a year: in most cases, the chicks hatch in the first ten days of June, but hatching may occur until the end of June. Females nesting on small islands further away from Valaam (Sosnovyi, Vostochnyi Sosnovyi) stay with the broods near the shore of these islands throughout the summer season. Singular broods and "kindergartens", comprising up to 18 chicks and 10 adult females, are regularly observed at the eastern and northern shores of Valaam in late June - August.

