streams. At large rivers, they mainly stick close to the river mouth. Relative abundance of minks in the Central forestry district in 2009 was quite high – 5 tracks/10 km, in 2010 – 8.4 tracks/10 km, with the animals actively colonizing Rybinskoye reservoir shore. The rise in track-leaving activity is presumably due to immigration of American Mink from adjacent territories. The status of this species in the reserve is not clear yet because of the protection regime. Otter lives on larger waterbodies. The investigated species are more abundant in the eastern part of Vologda Region. Thus, 202 otters and 742 minks were registered there in 2008. According to the surveys, otter and minks (American mink dominating) are close neighbours on most waterbodies.

INTRODUCING TOOLS IN GOOSE MONITORING IN SPRING STOPOVERS

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Research into the behaviour of game birds congesting in great numbers in spring stopovers is of high practical interest. It is mostly done through optics-aided visual registration of birds, which are normally distanced from the observer. Communicative signals are also recorded from a distance using gun microphones and parabolic dish microphones. In most cases, presence of the observer within the objects' field of vision modifies the birds' natural behaviour. To avoid the observer impact effect, we have designed a remotely controlled system to deliver equipment to the group of birds in the field. The base of the system is radio-controlled cross-country chassis. A solid model of a sitting bird (a Bewick swan model was used in the first experiment in May 2010) covers the chassis on the top. A platform fitted with a photo and a video camera and a digital voice recorder was placed

underneath the bird model body. The work plane of the microphone and lenses stick out of the pectus area of the model profile. The system could be effectively controlled up to a distance of 500 m. The trials demonstrated the following range of distances within which the birds in the field would let our swan approach: Lapwing – 1-2 m, Herring Gull – 2-5 m, Curlew – 3-8 m, White-fronted Goose – 8-20 m. We are now working on a small-size system with a solid model of Mallard.

DISTRIBUTION OF BURROWS OF THE BADGER (*MELES MELES*) IN EASTERN POLESYE (BRYANSK REGION)

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The badger is red-listed in Bryansk Region as a vulnerable species with declining numbers (category 2). The species occurs in all districts of the region, but its density and distribution strongly varies. The highest number of badger settlements is known in the northeast, west and southeast of the region. Overall numbers of the badger in the region are estimated at 300-350 individuals.

Materials on ecology of the badger in the region were collected during the period from 2000 to 2009. Data from scientific archives of the Bryansky Les reserve since 1988 were also analysed. In total, 41 settlements and burrows of the badger were surveyed. Of these, 16 settlements and burrows were studied within the reserve and its buffer zone (area 21840 ha).

Known burrows of the badger in the region are situated on elevated sites of terraces over floodplains (moraine, dunes, eskers). In the utter southeast, south and north of the region burrows are situated, as a rule,