

Summaries of project proposals submitted to the CMS Small Grants Programme 2012

Preserving the Lesser Kestrel in Croatia

Submitted by Association BIOM

The Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), a critically endangered raptor, has recently emerged as a breeding species on the island of Rab in Croatia. Being the only recorded breeding population on the eastern Adriatic coast, its conservation is of primary interest. This project aims to take effective measures encompassing the following actions that will improve its conservation status: involvement of local stakeholders in species protection; awareness raising; monitoring of the population to identify threats and to assess population trends; provision of artificial nesting sites; research of migration behaviour (routes and sites); habitat quality assessment; elaboration of a Species Action Plan.

Wintering ecology and conservation of the pallid harrier in Ethiopia

Submitted by University of Turku

The Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) is a long-distance migrant, classified as Near-Threatened, whose core populations are located in north-central Kazakhstan and south-western Siberia. To date, very little information exists about the ecological needs and conservation issues of this species during winter in Africa. The project aims to gather new information including on effective field techniques already tested in Kazakhstan and India to provide critically needed information on the diet, including abundance of prey, and habitat use of pallid harriers in the Bale Mountains region in Ethiopia that have been identified as one of most important wintering areas for this species in Africa. The ecological information will be then combined with the estimates of changes in land use to identify the potential conservation threats to the species.

Ecology and migration Red-footed falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) in North-Central Kazakhstan

Submitted by Kostanay State Pedagogical Institute

The Red-Footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) is the smallest of the falcons that inhabit Eurasia and very vulnerable to external factors. However, it engages in the longest-distance migration of all birds of prey in the region, to wintering sites in South Africa. The great length of transit routes to wintering places is unknown and the geography of that route is completely unstudied, especially for birds starting in Central Asia. The project aims to develop a complete picture of the routes and timing of the passage and wintering sites red-footed falcons nesting in north-central Kazakhstan as well as to collect data to characterize the demography and ecology of the species.

South meets North – A partnership linking Sooty Falcon conservationists¹

Submitted by The Peregrine Fund Madagascar Project

The Sooty Falcon (*Falco concolor*) is a Near Threatened raptor that breeds solely in the Middle East and north-eastern Africa, and winters mainly in Madagascar. The main breeding areas of Sooty Falcons are designated as Important Bird Areas which hold about 40% of the known nests in Oman. There is a lack of information on its wintering grounds and collaboration between the breeding and the non-breeding Range States. The projects aims to promote a geographically and temporally-whole approach to Sooty Falcon conservation by strengthening cooperation between Madagascar and Oman. Strategic planning and field research will be undertaken by selected teams from both countries.

¹ This project was selected for support by the CMS Secretariat

Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) Conservation Measures in Lower Danube Region

Submitted by Ecological Counseling Center Cahul

The Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), is a globally threatened species. The total European breeding population was estimated to 450 pairs and the number of nesting pairs is constantly reducing in Moldova. It is considered that the cause of this is, beside decreasing food resources, the gradual decrease in Raven numbers, as nest suppliers for the Saker Falcon. For this purpose the project aims to help the Saker Falcon in creating favorable nesting conditions, by installing and monitoring artificial nests, in the southern part of Republic of Moldova, and stabilizing the population also in neighbouring countries. The project will also take actions to reduce factors of mortality by guarding the artificial nests to reduce kills by hunters, and raise awareness with local communities.

Save the steppe species of birds of prey in Slovakia

Submitted by Raptor Protection Society of Slovakia

The population of Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) in Slovakia is on the brink of extinction. The number of natural nesting opportunities for Red-footed Falcon decreased significantly after the year 2000 in Slovakia which was followed by a rapid decline of the population. *Falco cherrug* and *Aquila heliaca*, other species using the same type of hunting and/or nesting habitat as Red-footed Falcon are also threatened by the loss and degradation of habitats as well as illegal activities, such as poisoning, nest robberies and shooting. The project aims to improve the conservation status of the above mentioned species by regular monitoring of populations and sites as well as creating suitable nesting opportunities for Red-footed Falcon.

Black Harrier movements outside the breeding season

Submitted by Fitzpatrick Institute

The Black Harrier (*Circus maurus*) is a threatened bird of prey endemic to southern Africa, and one of the most iconic species of South Africa in particular, where most of its breeding population occurs. The Black Harrier population has declined in recent years due to the destruction of its original breeding habitat. Knowledge about its needs or threats during the non-breeding season remains extremely scarce. The project aims to assess migratory movements outside the breeding season with the help of transmitters. A combination of field surveys and modelling to gather information about habitat use and selection will be also used to and identify conservation needs in these areas.

Migrating Kestrel Survey and Conservation

Submitted by Endangered Wildlife Trust

Three long-distance migratory 'kestrel' species occupy Eurasian breeding ranges and spend the boreal winter in the subtropics, migrating primarily to areas of central and southern Africa. These are the Lesser Kestrel, the Amur Falcon and the Red-footed Falcon. The Lesser Kestrel underwent rapid declines in Western Europe and on its wintering grounds in South Africa but now qualifies as Least Concern. The Amur Falcon is not currently classed as threatened and the Red-footed Falcon is listed as Near Threatened. The project aims to determine the population size and distribution of these species during their annual visit to South Africa in the summer months by using tracking devices and to improve conservation efforts in all areas where these species spend time throughout the year.

Monitoring of flagship bird species in Serbia

Submitted by Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia

Species such as *Haliaeetus albicilla* and *Falco cherrug* and *Aquila chrysaetos*, *Larus melanocephalus* and *Coracias garrulus* are among the rarest breeders in Serbia with populations of around 100 pairs, fluctuating from year to year. There is lack of information on population abundance which prevents the

definition of Action Plans and conservation measures. The project aims to undertake monitoring schemes of these species as well as of long-range migratory waterbirds (International Waterbird Census).