

# БАЛАБАН

(*Falco cherrug* Gray, 1834)

Балабан — споконвічний птах українських степів і гір, великий і красивий сокіл з усіма рисами, притаманними цьому благородному роду швидкокрилих небесних ловців: вправність і стрімкість, сила і хоробрість, велична постава і пронизливий погляд. Розміром дещо менший крука: довжина його тіла — 43–55 см, розмах крил — 105–130 см. Зверху дорослі птахи світло-бурі, голова і груди світліші, іноді жовтуваті. По боках голови тонкі нечіткі «вуса». Ноги жовті. Оперені молоді птахи дуже схожі на дорослих, дещо темніші; ноги блакитні, починають жовтіти, коли птаху виповнюється два роки.

Птах поширений у степах Євразії, від Центральної Європи до Монголії. Як і всі соколи, гнізд не будує, займає споруди інших видів птахів (найчастіше на лініях електромереж), або відкладає яйця на виступах скель і глинистих урвищ. Здобуває переважно ховрахів, хоча може полювати на птахів і дрібних гризунів.

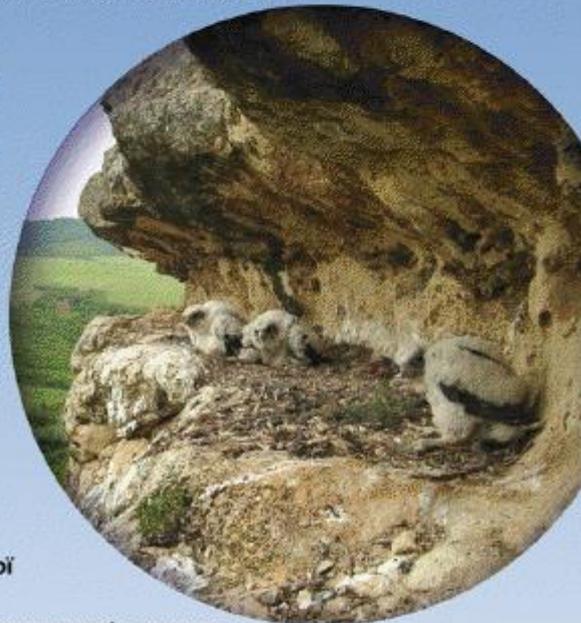


Ареал поширення балабана в Україні



Чисельність балабана у світі складає тільки 6–12 тис. пар, з яких у Європі гніздиться 600–800 пар. В Україні знаходиться найбільше в межах Європи гніздове угруповання, яке оцінюють приблизно в 350 пар. Головними чинниками, що призводять до скорочення чисельності виду, є зникнення місць гніздування, об'єктів живлення, інтенсифікація сільського господарства, технічна елімінація, отруєння, відстріл і вилучення птахів для соколиного полювання.

Балабан, як і більшість інших видів хижих птахів в Україні, знаходиться під охороною, його включено у Червону книгу України і до багатьох міжнародних природоохоронних конвенцій. Заборонено знищення птахів, руйнування гнізд, вилучення яєць, пташенят і вивезення за кордон. Такі дії переслідуються відповідно до чинного законодавства.



Політ балабана – втілення вільного духу природи, духу свободи, яким сповнена українська земля. Зберегти цього птаха у природі – означає залишити для нащадків вагому і невід'ємну частину загальної природної спадщини нашої країни.

Український центр досліджень хижих птахів активно займається охороною цього рідкісного сокола, здійснюючи моніторинг популяції, виявляючи чинники загрози, встановлюючи штучні гнізда, підвищуючи рівень обізнаності широких верств населення.



Ви можете дізнатись більше про нашу діяльність на Інтернет-сторінці: <http://raptors.org.ua>.

Проект охорони балабана в Україні підтриманий програмою Rufford Small Grant



The Rufford  
Small Grants Foundation  
[www.ruffordsmallgrants.org](http://www.ruffordsmallgrants.org)

# CONSERVATION OF GLOBALLY ENDANGERED SAKER FALCONS (*FALCO CHERRUG*) AND THEIR WINTERING SITES IN SICILY

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The results of the Hungarian-Slovak Saker conservation LIFE projects (LIFE06 NAT/HU/000096) carried out between 2006-2010 showed that a significant proportion of the Central European population spend the winter in South-Italy including Sicily. The project is a joint effort of birds of prey experts of MME/BirdLife Hungary and the University of Palermo to survey the wintering sites of endangered Saker Falcons in Sicily including habitats and major mortality factors and prepare a conservation plan to eliminate them. Raising awareness among stakeholders and thus to enhance conservation efforts on one of the major wintering areas of Central European population of the species is also part of the project.

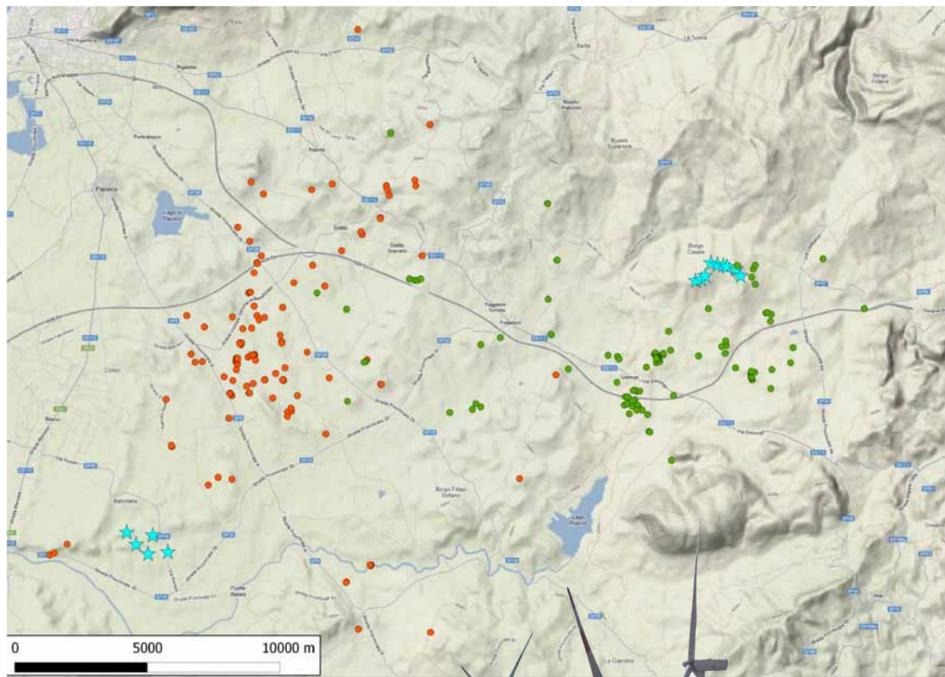
## MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT ARE

1. Field survey – During the winter period, September 2012 – April 2013, a field survey will be carried out on the known Saker wintering sites in Sicily. The information to be collected for further evaluation for the conservation plan: presence of Sakers; presence of other raptors; habitat types; presence of prey species; agricultural practices; hunting activities on the site; poisoning; presence of wind farms; presence and type of power lines. Information are to be collected through field observation and requesting locals. Spatial development plans in regions of question will be analysed as well to identify potential threats to the wintering areas.
2. Modelling habitat use – Even though the satellite-tagged Sakers have shown some wintering areas, it is very likely that there are many more sites that should be known and protected for Sakers. A GIS model will be made based on the initially gathered information on the known wintering sites. The GIS model analyses the features of known wintering sites and search for similar sites in Sicily. Results of the model will be used in the field surveys.
3. Preparing conservation plan – After gathering all available information, Hungarian and Italian experts prepare a conservation action plan that include: background, general and site-specific problem description defining mortality factors and potential threats on Saker Falcons; key stakeholders; general and site-specific conservation measures to be taken; expected results of conservation actions; possible financial sources to cover implementation measures.
4. Raising the awareness of decision-makers, key-stakeholders and general public – As a first step towards ensuring conservation of wintering Sakers and their sites, awareness raising is indispensable. The action aims to draw the attention of key-stakeholders to the importance of nature conservation including birds of prey and their habitats. Target groups are land owners, farmers, hunters, bird watchers, conservation NGOs and governmental organisations, students and politicians.

## ANTICIPATED ACHIEVEMENTS OR OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

- ▲ The most important outcome of the project is the conservation plan that defines accurately the sites and conservation actions needed to ensure the appropriate protection of Sakers and their Sicilian wintering sites. The conservation plan is to be sent to all relevant stakeholders.
- ▲ As a result of the conservation plan and awareness raising actions, stakeholder dialogue starts in order to eliminate/minimise threats on wintering Saker Falcons in Sicily.
- ▲ As a multiplier effect, not only Saker Falcons, but also other species (not only birds of prey) will receive more attention and more protection due to the results of the project. An important species from this aspect is the European subspecies of Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus feldeggii*) that has the largest population in Sicily and their distribution range coincide with the Sakers' wintering range.
- ▲ Students participating in the project can write their thesis about the project and use their new knowledge in field techniques and GIS modelling later in other project for the benefit of nature.
- ▲ The Italian-Hungarian co-operation can be extended in the future to other topics for the benefit of the participants and the nature.

The project is supported by the Nando Peretti Foundation.



Habitat use of wintering Saker Falcons and location of wind turbines in West-Sicily  
circles: Juvenile Sakers wintering in West-Sicily  
light blue stars: Wind turbines



Wind farms pose threats on wintering Saker Falcons also in Sicily (Photo: Mátyás Prommer)



Adult male saker  
(Photo: Jozef Chavko)

# CONSERVATION OF THE SAKER FALCON (*FALCO CHERRUG*) IN THE UKRAINIAN STEPPES: SURVEY, RISK ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTING CONSERVATION MEASURES

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The project – supported by Rufford Small Grant programme – surveys the populations of the endangered Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), its habitats and negative factors affecting them, as well as implementing conservation measures in South Ukraine.

Human activities cause Saker Falcon, a flagship species of the Eurasian steppes disappearing throughout of its range including Ukraine, along with its characteristic habitat type. Birds of prey having large territories are especially affected by the habitat changes (turning steppes into agricultural land), and other human-induced negative factors (electrocution, shooting, poisoning, etc.). The project surveys the population and conservation status of the species and its habitats (with special regard to the threats on them); proposes management plans for their efficient conservation in South-Ukraine; implements on-site conservation measures; raises public awareness and involves stakeholders in conservation activities.

## THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES ARE

1. Collecting and analyzing the information available to identify important Saker areas in the Crimea and South Ukraine, and choosing pilot areas.
2. Field survey in the identified areas – An extensive field survey are carried out to gain information on (a) the population status; (b) habitat types and status; (c) threats on the species and the habitats; (d) the stakeholders and their impact and attitude towards the project's aims; (e) other bird species with special regard to birds of prey as a collateral result.
3. Hungarian team members transfer their knowledge in using the latest technology for the survey and mapping the results.
4. Tagging juveniles with satellite transmitters to learn new Saker areas – Juveniles and adults will be tagged with satellite transmitters to learn more about the areas they are using as well as their other movements. Building artificial nests – Sakers, do not build nest, thus the distribution of the species is limited by natural nesting possibilities.
5. Evaluating data and preparing management plan proposal on the species and on habitats in the pilot areas.
6. Publishing results and proposals, and contacting local and national authorities to facilitate the implementation of the conservation.
7. Involving local allies – In the beginning of the project, major potential allies to be involved will be identified and the list will be continued as the field survey proceeds.  
Organisations participating in the project are Pilis Nature Conservation Association (Hungary) and Ukrainian Birds of Prey Research Centre (Ukraine).

## RESULTS

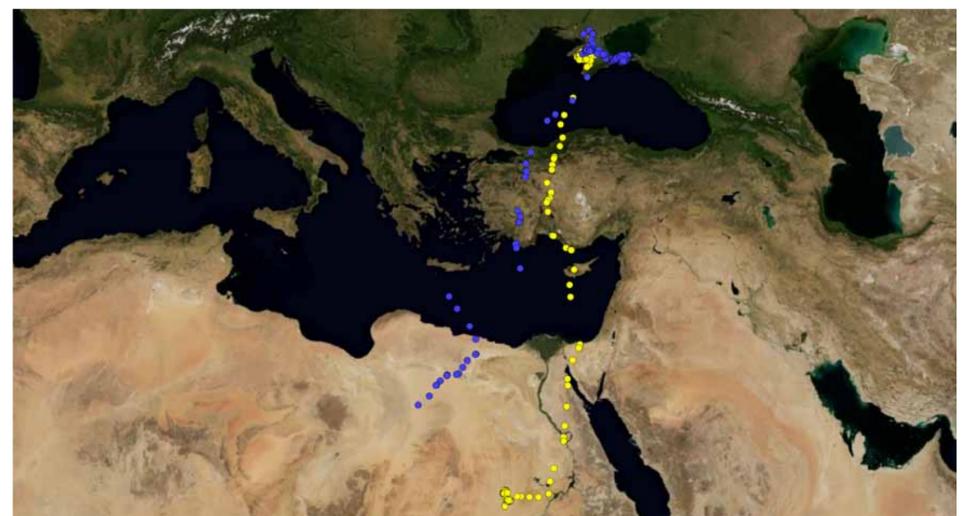
A joint 2-week Ukrainian-Hungarian- Romanian expedition took place in the second half of June 2012 in the Crimea and south-west Ukraine to map the distribution of Saker Falcons and their habitats.

When visiting old Saker eyries in some areas, it was not uncommon that to find only adults, or nothing at all. On other areas, fortunately, on we have found a number of saker pairs with fledged juveniles.

Two Sakers were tagged in order to gain information on their habitat use and movements that is crucial to plan the conservation measures. They left Crimea early October. They crossed the Black Sea, Turkey and the Mediterranean Sea. Then one of the Sakers disappeared in East-Libya; while the other one apparently stopped in South Egypt for winter.

Threats on Sakers and habitats identified: (1) electrocution; (2) declining food base (rodents) due to transforming agriculture and habitats; (3) shooting and poisoning; (4) nest robbing to sell Sakers for falconry and for tourist attraction; (5) wind farm development; (6) natural threats.

In October, experts installed 10 artificial nests to provide nesting possibilities in a nest-poor, but otherwise appropriate area. In addition, three lectures were given in local schools meetings were organized with local hunters to raise stakeholders' awareness.



Autumn migration of satellite tracked female Saker Falcons from Ukraine to North Africa