

## Project Update: May 2010

The project has started with great enthusiasm of the project team and on time, as the red-footed falcons returned to their breeding sites in late April 2010.

Material for nest boxes was purchased in late March 2010 and components of boxes were put together by the beginning of May 2010. Nest boxes are constructed in a way to protect chicks from adverse weather when they are particularly susceptible, having no feathers. On the other hand, red-footed falcon is not typical cavity-breeder, as it breeds in open nests built by hooded crows, magpies and, in the majority of cases, common rook. The project team has constructed three types of boxes, with one, two or three entrances. This approach will allow us to see which types of breeding place this falcon favours.



Up to now, 42 nest boxes are installed in four colonies - two close to Padej, one near Vrbica and one close to Jazovo in North Banat. All of them are active and first falcons are occupying their nesting places. The worst situation was in Vrbica colony where we installed 15 nest boxes. The rook colony there is very small (less than 10 pairs) and there is only few available nests for red-footed falcon. That situation caused strong competition and we expect that nest boxes will, therefore, be accepted with no delay. Without nest boxes this breeding colony, containing 28 pairs in 2009, will collapse very soon. Prior to installation, we put sand and grass on a floor of the nest box, knowing that red-footed falcon does not build a nest but takes over nests that are already constructed. All other boxes will be put in active colonies. We expect to empower these sites in order to catalyse population recovery: new pairs will settle most probably in old, stable colonies. Furthermore, priority will be given to the colonies where only a few rook nests are left, but which are known as traditional red-footed falcon breeding sites.

In order to advertise the project, a T-shirt was printed with male falcon on it. It has already attracted huge attention to the project.

Contacts with land owners where colonies are situated are established and it is expected that we will manage to cease tree cutting on them completely.