

Special questions:

Up to which distance from the wind turbines are negative impacts on the reproduction success and home range expected? What is the maximum density of nests in grain fields? In case of granting an authorization (for building a wind turbine) and, as a consequence, loss of the reproduction habitat, what kind of compensation would be acceptable from a bird conservation standpoint? Is it enough to ensure the survival of the breeding location in future or are there other demands for the conservation of Montagu's Harrier? What measures must be taken into account to ensure that?

Lastly three critical questions to the bird experts:

Is it really desirable and a strategy for the future to offer Montagu's Harriers grain fields for reproduction by different programmes, funds and sponsorships (with continuous binding of annual expenses from national and EU funds) despite of all known conflicts with the different land users? Is there a common expert agreement that Montagu's Harriers are more and more adapting themselves to the originally not used or preferred intensively used farm land? Will there be an adaptation to single wind turbines, e.g. by changing regional nesting areas?

Perspectives for Conservation of Montagu's Harrier in Southern Portugal

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The present report reviews the current knowledge of the population trends, breeding and foraging habitats for Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) in southern Portugal. A conservation strategy for the species is also discussed.

Montagu's Harrier is a widely distributed species in Portugal. However, in recent years a general population decline has been inferred and it is considered as "vulnerable" by the Portuguese Vertebrate Red Data Book (SNPRCN 1990). In 1993, the Portuguese breeding population was estimated at 900-1200 pairs (Onofre & Rufino 1993), but now there is no data to allow a reliable assessment of its present population size and its national or regional trends.

Harvesting machinery has caused dramatic changes in the breeding success of

birds nesting in cultivated fields, with nests of Montagu's Harrier being strongly affected by this activity. Here I present some information about the harvest impact on the reproductive success in southern Portugal.

A preliminary study done near Évora (southern Portugal) revealed the importance of the crop fields and landscape mosaic to the conservation of Montagu's Harrier. The effects of the Common Agriculture Policy and the national options which promote the conversion of large areas of cereal fields and fallow land into intensive agriculture, vineyard or afforestation, lead to a loss of breeding and foraging habitat of the species.

Accordingly, the future of the Portuguese Montagu's Harrier is still uncertain. The

extent and nature of the conservation measures needed should be concentrated on protecting whole ecosystems, namely pro-

moting the maintenance of traditional agricultural practices.

Distribution and population trend of Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* in Poland

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Poland holds one of the most important populations of Montagu's Harrier in Europe: According to the recent estimates, the population size of 1200-1500 breeding pairs is the fourth largest (after Russia, Spain and France). Moreover, in the recent decade there is a marked increase of numbers in many parts of the country, mainly in northern and central Poland. This increase is connected with three main factors:

– increase of fallow land area after collapsing of state farms

– increase of crops breeding population
– general increase of raptor population – “birds of prey come back” after the pesticide era.

On the other hand in some traditional breeding strongholds like Biebrza or Chelm Marshes, a significant decrease was noted in the recent decade. It is connected with changes of land use within and in the environs of marshes as well as with a strong increase of mammalian predators – foxes, raccoons etc.

Experiences with a program of wing-tagging adult Montagu's Harriers

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Protecting Montagu's Harrier since 1982 I began to ring the birds in 1989. In spite of our increasing efforts in protection I have noticed that the birds disappeared, that means there have been fluctuations which cannot be explained.

In 1996, together with Alain Leroux I began a program for wing-tagging of the adults in order to study more exactly the faithfulness to nesting areas of the breeding birds in an area of 80 000 hectares (1 ha

= 2.47 acres). These site studies since 1986 have shown large fluctuations (from 50-10 breeding pairs), varying from year to year. The capture of 50 adults and the individual marking have allowed us to prove some characteristics of the species: 15% of the captured birds have already been ringed and provide us with their dates – date and place of their hatching. Thus we have learned that almost none of “our” young come back to the area (1%), but that birds

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