

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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