

2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RAPTORS

ABSTRACTS

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PROGRAMME OUTLINES FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE SAKER POPULATIONS IN EUROPEAN RUSSIA

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The saker falcon population in East Europe (except Hungary) is rapidly decreasing, mostly owing to a loss of habitats, decline of principal prey (susliks, etc.), nest robbing and general disturbance. For the last 5-10 years, the species has almost entirely disappeared from south-central Russia, west of the Volga river. The last sole pairs changed their breeding habits from nesting on trees into powerline pylons and river cliffs. At present we believe it is hardly probable that over 100 saker pairs breed in European Russia. Roughly similar populations (up to 150 pairs) inhabit the Ukraine. Some preliminary outlines of a programme for saker population restoration include the following actions: 1) assessment of the existing populations, their trends and reasons for decline; 2) breeding habits and habitats, as well as population status of nest-providing; 3) migration ways and wintering places, in particular indicated by satellite telemetry; 4) prey distribution and abundance; 5) causes and amounts of destruction and disturbance of raptors, and the attitudes of local people to them; 6) captive breeding facilities and capacity; 7) assessment of the environmental carrying-capacity for the reintroduction of captive-bred falcons including the provision of artificial nests; 8) measures to stimulate the recovery of existing populations including strict protection of nest sites and hunting habitats; 9) financial and technical support of efforts for population monitoring, reintroduction and recovery of the saker. After thorough discussion on the basis of the above outlines, the programme and action plans have to be prepared by the working group. They could be put into effect through well co-ordinated joint efforts by ornithologists, falconers and conservationists, in regions of breeding, migration and wintering of East European populations of the saker falcon.