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NEWSLETTER

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LIFE EUROKITE

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„The red kite is our only native raptor species, whose relatively small breeding population is almost entirely confined to the continent of Europe. The species faces many conservation threats, not least through illegal poisoning and shooting by humans along its migratory flyway. The EUROKITE project will shine a bright light on these conservation threats; take steps to help tackle some of the most serious issues on a Europe-wide scale; and in this way provide a safe future for one of our most spectacular birds“.

Duncan Orr-Ewing

Head of Species and Land Management RSPB -
Scotland



AMUS (Acción por el Mundo Salvaje) and reintroduction of red kites in Extremadura and Andalucía, Spain

An exciting part of the EUROKITE LIFE project is the plan to translocate red kites back to a part of their former breeding range in SW Spain, in the border of western Extremadura and northwest Andalucía close to the Portuguese border. This area still has a small breeding population of red kites, which the project aims to reinforce, and over time to re-establish a secure breeding population. The location already hosts an important wintering population of red kites each year. This part of the EUROKITE LIFE project is led by AMUS (www.amus.org.es) who have extensive experience of various raptor conservation projects in this area. This action is co-financed by Fundación Biodiversidad (Spanish Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge), the electric company ENDESA and Fundación Banco de Santander in collaboration with the regional Governments of Extremadura and Andalusia.

The novel aspect to this project is that it is planned to use donor stock of red kite chicks from the thriving south of England red kite population to support the population reinforcement. This English red kite population originates itself from a reintroduction programme, which started in 1989, using Spanish donor stock sourced from Navarra in Northern Spain!





A project feasibility study is now being developed, led by Alfonso Godino of AMUS and with the support of Spanish, UK and Italy raptor experts including Ian Carter and Duncan Orr-Ewing (RSPB Scotland), both of whom were involved with the original red kite reintroductions to England and Scotland respectively. Once the feasibility study has been finalised in 2021, it is proposed to submit a licensing application for the supply of red kite donor stock to Natural England. A suitable release site is in the process of being identified, and hopefully the first birds for release will be supplied in 2022. The chicks will be reared in captivity in southwestern Spain and then hacked into the wild using tried and tested methods, developed and refined for the UK and Italian reintroduction red kite projects;

Alfonso Godino of AMUS said “For AMUS, to participate in the restoration of the southern red kite populations in Spain is one of our most important challenges, but especially, it is really exciting the narrow collaboration with the more experiment projects and experts on red kite management and conservation in the world, which will be a guarantee of success. We hope that EUROKITE LIFE project will be the first step to recover the red kite not only in Spain, but also in Portugal.”

Duncan Orr-Ewing said “We are delighted to collaborate with AMUS and LIFE EUROKITE on this exciting red kite conservation project. It is gratifying to see that successful red kite reintroduction projects in the UK can now support similar projects in Spain, especially since Spanish colleagues supported our own projects of this type from the late 1980s”.

Bird protection on overhead lines – Working Group „Powerlines“

In addition to the human causes of death, such as poisoning or illegal hunting, the powerline infrastructure can also be a problem for birds of prey. One goal of the LIFE EUROKITE project is to identify problematic overhead lines. For this purpose, data on the use of space as well as direct deaths of red kites are evaluated. So-called hot spots for electrocution and collisions can be identified and targeted countermeasures can be taken in cooperation with the network operators. In order to create an early opportunity to exchange information on bird protection on overhead lines, a working group “Powerlines” was founded as part of the LIFE EUROKITE project at the end of 2020. It serves as a platform for the exchange of information and experience for network operators and other actors in nature conservation in this area. The working group offers the opportunity to exchange information on the current state of the best practices in relation to the various measures against electrocution and collision. In addition, the participants gain insights into the various bird protection projects of the network operators and the resulting findings.





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At the beginning of December, the working group's first workshop with participants and speakers from the fields of power grid operation, nature conservation and consulting and research companies took place. The lectures and discussions initially focused on introducing the topic of electrocution and collision and general technical avoidance options. In addition, speakers gave insights into the procedures of power grid operators from different countries and shared their practical experience with protective measures. The working group also talked about what to look for when choosing products to avoid electrocution so that they can withstand electrical and environmental factors, and what mistakes to avoid when retrofitting. Experience reports from other LIFE projects such as the “LIFE for safe grid” and “Great Bustard” rounded off the workshop. The working group is open to power grid operators from all European countries and experts from the fields of nature conservation.

The LIFE EUROKITE project team is looking forward to using a large number of GPS data sets to provide more precise information on the degree to which red kites are affected.

“As a transmission system operator, it is important to Amprion to continue to contribute to minimizing the dangers for birds through protective measures on power lines. We are therefore pleased that we are supporting LIFE EUROKITE and that we are helping to ensure that more precise statements can be made on the use of space and habitat by the red kite and other species of birds of prey due to the large number of animals with transmitters in order to take more targeted, effective and efficient protective measures. In addition, the project offers the opportunity to create an exchange across company and national borders and to work together for bird protection. ”

Stefanie Holm, Consultant
Nature protection/ Environmental planning power lines Amprion GmbH



Contact persons:



Werner Falb-Meixner

President of the Central European Society for Raptor Protection (MEGEG)

Werner.Falb-Meixner@Raptorprotection.eu



Dr. Hans Peter Kollar

Vice president of the Central European Society for Raptor Protection (MEGEG)

Office@Dr-Kollar.at



Mag. Dr. Rainer Raab

LIFE EUROKITE – Technical Manager

Rainer.Raab@TB Raab.at



DI Andreas Gärtner

LIFE EUROKITE – Project Administrator

Andreas.Gaertner@TB Raab.at



Hannah Böing, MSc

LIFE EUROKITE – Public Relation

Hannah.Boeing@TB Raab.at



Manuela Löwold

President of the Central European Society for Raptor Protection Germany (MEGEG Germany)

Manuela.Loewold@MEGEG.de

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Coordinating Beneficiary



The TB Raab was commissioned to implement the LIFE EUOKITE project after a pan-European public tender.



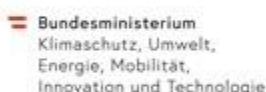
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