

Lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) in Thrace – distribution, numbers, and threats

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ABSTRACT

There are a lot of detailed data for the distribution and numbers of the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) from Spain, Italy, and Greece (southern part), where are the largest colonies of this species in Europe. There was no data, until now, for the area under this study, constituting of territories in South-eastern Bulgaria (there the species was restored as nesting in 2014), the European part of Turkey, and North-eastern Greece. At the same time the Thracian (South-eastern Balkan) population of the species is a veritable bridge between the numerous populations of the species in South Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece), and Asia (Turkey, Israel, Kazakhstan, etc.). There is data for more than 15 colonies in Thrace, gathered by us in the target territories – 5 in North-eastern Greece, at least 10 in the European part of Turkey, and 2 colonies in South-eastern Bulgaria. The number of the colonies surveyed is from 2 to 40 nesting pairs, situated, predominantly, in residential housing, rural houses and mosques. 3 of the colonies use natural habitats for nesting, such as seaside cliffs (two colonies), and rock formation in mainland European Turkey (1 colony). The main threats, registered, are the destruction of nesting habi-