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Correlation between the choice of partner and the individual nesting territory in the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) and preconditions for polyandry

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ABSTRACT

In the period 2015 – 2016 within a project for recovering the population of the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) in Bulgaria were conducted daily observations and closely monitoring the nesting process in the newly formed colony. The nesting territory of the colony is centered around a releasing on which the artificial feeding of released birds was taking place. From the observations during the breeding season of 2016 was established a correlation between the ratio of the male and female birds returned from migration, the choice of a partner and the occupation of the individual nesting territory. This dependence was established in a situation of shortage of breeding female birds and excess of male birds, in which the gender roles in choosing the nest and partner were clearly visible. In 2015, the sex ratio is more aligned, which contributed to the rapid formation of couples and occupation of the territory. In 2016 due to a significant shortage of female birds and the gradual filling of the colony mainly from returning adult males, we had the opportunity to observe in detail the formation of the breeding couples. On the day of the appearance of a new returned female, she has a choice between several free male birds with already established nesting territories. She forms a short-term pairs with them until she finds the one whose territory is the most favorable. This indicates a priority of the nest site in front of the breeding partner. The ratio of sexes in 2016 created a prerequisite for polyandry, which further enhance the above view.