



Project Partners



Deliverable: Report on the 2nd visit of networking with LIFE projects

ACTION F.3: *Networking with other LIFE and/or non-LIFE projects*

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Networking between the LIFE projects LIFE-FORBIRDS and LIFE for the Lesser Kestrel

This is the report from the visit of the project LIFE-FORBIRDS (LIFE13 NAT/CY/000176) to the LIFE for the Lesser Kestrel project (LIFE11 NAT/GR/1011), between the 16th and 19th of May 2017. The visit brought together the project's members with scientists and authority representatives involved in a LIFE project in Greece.

The project lasted for 48 months (01/06/2012 to 31/05/2016) and was implemented in 3 Special Protection Areas of the Natura 2000 network of Greece, namely: Thessaly plain (Perioch Thessalikou Kampou - GR1420011), Mount Maurovouni (Oros Marvrovouni - GR1420006) and Reservoirs area of former Lake Karla (Periochi Tamieftiron Proin Limnis Karlas - GR1430007).

The project aimed to enable the creation of an effective and sustainable framework for the conservation of Lesser Kestrel in 3 Special Protection Areas of the Natura 2000 network, which support more than 75 % of the population of Lesser Kestrels in Greece and 6% of the European population, through the creation of a well- focused conservation policy, planning and implementation of specific actions required to ensure a positive trend of the Lesser Kestrel's population in the area.

The LIFE-FORBIRDS team visiting the LIFE project abroad consisted of: Mr. Haris Nikolaou and Mr. Stavros Mouchlis (Department of Forests - Coordinating Beneficiary), Mr. Constantinos Perikleous (Cyprus Forest Association) and Mr. Charalambos Hadjistyllis (Game & Fauna Service).

Day 1: 17th May 2017

During the first day, the LIFE-FORBIRDS (LFB) project team was hosted at the University of Thessaly, which was the coordinating beneficiary of the LIFE for the Lesser Kestrel (LLK) project (Figure 1). There, the two projects were presented, focusing on their objectives and activities. During the exchange of experience and scientific knowledge, the visitors were informed on LLK projects actions, the After-LIFE activities and how the collaboration of locals (farmers, landowners, inhabitants) was achieved. Regarding the maintenance of the nests installed in the framework of the project, this is carried out by students (mainly post-graduate), who take care of them usually in the framework of their thesis. As far as the latter is concerned, instead of leasing the land from private landowners in order to implement the project's activities (as was the case for LFB project), the LLK project used another approach: "Farmers were provided with seeds to sow and grow at their fields and instead of finally harvesting all the yield, small patches were left untouched. Also, trees were given to the farmers to plant, provided that underneath cereals would be sown and these would also be left unharvested. In all cases, use of insecticides/ herbicides was deterred".



Figure 1: Networking meeting during the 1st day, at the University of Thessaly (coordinating beneficiary of the LIFE for the Lesser Kestrel).

Afterwards, the LIFE-FORBIRDS team visited the LLK's exhibition at Kanalia, which hosts informational material, maps and other exhibits related to Lesser Kestrels (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Visit at the LIFE for the Lesser Kestrel exhibition at Kanalia.

The project team continued its visit at Rizomylos area (near Karla Lake) where they met with representatives from the Management Body of Ecodevelopment Area of Karla – Mavrovouni - Kefalovriso – Velestino, who also collaborated for the implementation of LLK project (Figure 3). They presented the LLK project and their involvement in the project, focusing on

issues they used to have with the use of insecticides/ herbicides and the farmers' way of thinking. The LFB members also presented their project and activities being implemented.



Figure 3: Networking meeting with the Management Body of Ecodevelopment Area of Karla – Mavrovouni - Kefalovriso – Velestino.

The project team then visited the Karla Lake, as well as the lands where the LLK project's activities were implemented (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Karla Lake and surrounding fields.

The final meeting of the day was with the Farmers' Association of Rizomylos area who declared their great satisfaction with the project's results, since the issues they had with locust infestations were dealt with (NB: Lesser kestrel's diet mainly consists of locusts).

Day 2: 18th May 2017

The project team visited the project area where they were presented with the various types of artificial nests for Lesser Kestrels installed in the field as well as at inhabited houses. The nests at houses/ public buildings were installed at rooftops or in groups (so that “colonies” could be formed) (Figures 5 and 6). It was clearly noticed that the inhabitants had accepted/ approved the birds in their life since almost all houses had nests for the Lesser Kestrels to breed.



Figure 5: Nests installed on rooftop to form a colony.



Figure 6: Nest installed at house with successful breeding (eggs laid).

The team then participated in bird observation activities, including capturing, ringing and installation of transmitters (GPS, data loggers) (Figure 7). Furthermore, the pellets of the birds were examined to determine their diet, where about 90% consists of locusts at 90% and the rest from mice, shrews, lizards, etc.



Figure 7: Bird ringing (left) and placement of transmitter (right).