

Assessing the current status and distribution of Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel in Azerbaijan



PROJECT REPORT



Shahin Isayev

Azerbaijan Ornithological Society

Tel: +994 55 657 4158

Fax: +994 12 421 6713

E-mail: Shahin_isayev@aos.az

www.aos.az

Project Summary

Azerbaijan has its own importance for the raptors as it plays a host role for migrating and breeding raptors including the Globally Threatened Species such as Imperial Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Saker Falcon and many other Birds of Prey. During the year it is possible to observe the big number of raptors but the lack of the ornithologists doing the surveys of raptors didn't let to say the exact scientific data about breeding and wintering numbers of these birds. Project gave possibility to have the model of distribution of Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel with help of international experts and help to improve the conservation of the species in Azerbaijan with involvement of local stakeholders and governmental support. Working groups created with in project did surveys of species and awareness activities at project areas. New scientific information about both species for the North-West and middle part of the country is collected as a database and sent to all necessary organizations. Regular public awareness activities during the project implementation increased the knowledge about importance of birds and their habitats.

Objectives of the project

- Data about current status, threats and distribution of the Imperial Eagle in and of Lesser Kestrel in the lowlands of Azerbaijan is collected and distributed
- Public awareness raised among general public and governmental agencies
- Capacity of AOS (national NGO) and its local contacts improved
- Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel groups in Azerbaijan are established
- The distribution model of "project species" in Azerbaijan is created
- Local caretakers at the project areas are identified
- Public and political support for the conservation of species is raised

Achievements of the project

- **Working groups established**

In the beginning of the project team members organized two groups for studying the project species and for public awareness activities. Team members divided into two groups. First group started the preparation of printing materials for public awareness activities. As well they started informing the relevant organizations about the project start. Second group started planning of the field surveys and other organizational questions for implementation of project. Initial meeting held on 13 March 2007 at Azerbaijan Ornithological Society for presenting the project.



➤ **Initial trainings were organized for field surveys of Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel**

Two trainings were organized for team members on field research of “project species”. First training was conducted on 2-3 April 2007 by international experts Horvath Marton and Fater Imre. Two days training was accompanied with field training. Topics of the training were identification of Imperial Eagles and other birds of prey, nest finding, nest monitoring, monitoring of breeding success, identification of threat, potential suitable habitats for breeding of Imperial Eagles.



Imperial Eagle research training conducted by Horvath Marton at AOS office

Second training was conducted on 10-11 May 2007 by Elchin Sultanov. Training was about research of Lesser Kestrel. Topics covered all moments of research of breeding of Lesser Kestrel. Field training was done after the theoretical part of the training.



Lesser Kestrel research training conducted by Elchin Sultanov at AOS office

➤ **Field surveys started**

Team members have been in the field 80 days during the project implementation.

Imperial Eagle surveys

Starting from the April (4-13 April) 2007 team members started the comprehensive survey of breeding population of Imperial Eagles in North-West part of the country. In the first part of the surveys international trainers as well participated for teaching the team members the practical methods of the research. Within 9 field days 6000 sq km area has been studied. During 98,5 working hours team members checked 6 known nests, one nest was found with help of local people, and further 18 new active nests were found by team members. All together team members registered 25 incubating birds and 30 active territories where 65 Imperial Eagles were observed. Coordinates of the nests were taken with GPS for putting the points to the maps.





Pictures from the Imperial Eagle surveys

Lesser Kestrel surveys

Team members started the Lesser Kestrel surveys from the May (19-28 May) 2007. Research was done in the middle part of the country where the suitable habitats for breeding of Lesser Kestrel occur. During 10 field working days team members studied the 5500 sq km area within 90 hours. 19 new breeding colonies of Lesser Kestrel were found and all coordinates have been taken by team members. All together approximately 300 nests were registered at the colonies. The colonies were found mainly on the roof of unused stock-farm buildings farm. One colony was found under the bridge on Jeyranbatan River. And one colony was found on the tree holes.



Pictures from the Lesser Kestrel surveys

➤ Monitoring of breeding places

Monitoring of the sites has been carried out during all breeding season for both species. During end of June, July and in beginning of the August sites identified for Imperial Eagles have been visited. During the site visits food remains, feathers of the birds collected, number of fledged birds counted for assessing the breeding success. From 25 observed at the beginning of the project 4

were destroyed and 2 pairs built their nests close to the previous nest. From 21 active nests 27 juveniles fledged at the end of July 2007.

During the June, July the colonies of Lesser Kestrel found by team members during first surveys was monitored. The number of juveniles at the end of the breeding season was 40-60% of all the birds at 19 colonies studied colonies. Beside the breeding season winter counts of Imperial Eagles were done during the winter 2007.

Team members monitored the nesting places during breeding season in 2008. All colonies of Lesser Kestrel were in place. Number of nests in the colony and the number of fledged birds from the nests were same as previous year: Number of nests 300; number of juveniles was 40-60 % of all birds.

12 of the previous year Imperial Eagles nests were unused and the pairs changed their places to another places close to their old nests. Total number of checked nests was 26 together with unused nests (Some of the previous year nesting places were inaccessible because of the strong rain and the level of rivers increased). Number of fledged birds from 14 nests was 21.

Imperial eagle chicks on the nest



Food remains collected under the nest



Already fledged juvenile LK



Team members near the destroyed nest



Team members are checking the colony of LK under the bridge

➤ **Public awareness materials produced**

- Two T-shirts with pictures of project species
- Two stickers (attached)
- Two posters produced (posters prepared within different project but used for awareness activities)

➤ **Public awareness activities carried out by team members**

Team members did several meeting at each site during the visits with local people living nearby. We organized 4 different competitions and seminars for schoolchildren, 2 meetings with local decision makers for protection of Globally Threatened Species and 1 meeting with members of hunting associations at the places. *Meeting for including the Lesser Kestrel in to the National Red Book were held. Lesser Kestrel is included into the list of next publication of National Red Book of Azerbaijan.*



Meeting with employees of school Aggel NP



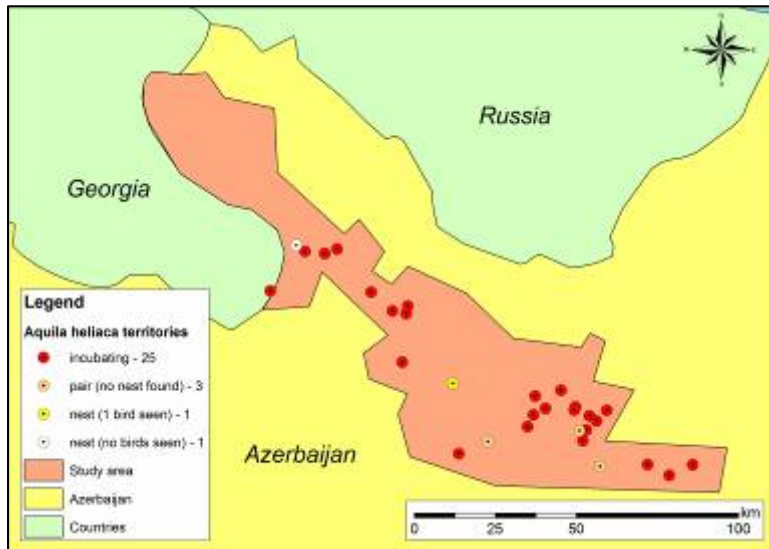
We organized different games and talks for schoolchildren at project sites



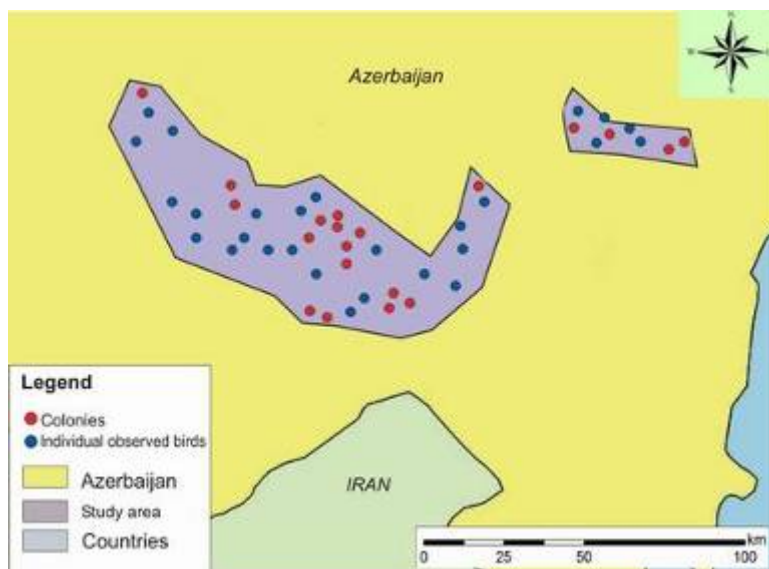
➤ **Maps on distribution of both species prepared**



Map1. Study area of both species



Map2. Distribution of Imperial Eagles on the studied area



Map3. Distribution of Lesser Kestrel on the studied area

➤ **Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel groups are established**

For more effective conservation of both project species team members create the groups. Group member are the local people living at or around the project studied areas, school teachers, rangers of protected areas and hunting associations, schoolchildren, ornithologists from AOS and from Institute of Zoology and as well the volunteers from Baku State University. For the time being Imperial Eagle group have 17 and Lesser Kestrel group have 21 members. Group members are keeping contact with phone and with face to face talks. But AOS is working on to organize regular meeting of group members for their more effective work for conservation of project species in Azerbaijan. Group members are monitoring the known nests, looking for new breeding areas and carrying out the public awareness activities at the project sites.

➤ Scientific articles prepared

One scientific article about distribution and modern status of Lesser Kestrel in Azerbaijan already published in Russia in scientific journal "Birds of the Caucasus". The article about distribution and modern status of Imperial Eagle in Azerbaijan is under preparation and will be sent for publishing soon.

➤ Booklet about results of the project prepared and distributed

Results of the project prepared as a 10 page booklet and distributed to all relevant organizations and among the local people at project sites. Booklet includes as well the information form firs project which project team has implemented in 2005.



Bu layihə 2004-2005-ci illərdə həyata keçirilən "Azərbaycanda Dünya Üzrə Təhlükədə Olan Quşların monitorinqi və qorunması" layihəsinin davamı olaraq "Conservation Leadership Programme" tərəfindən dəstəklənmişdir.




Tərtibatçılar: Gülsər Ələkbərova
Şahin İsayev



"Azərbaycanda imperator qartalının və çöl muymulunun müasir vəziyyətinin öyrənilməsi" layihəsi



Dəstə: *Falconiformes* - Quzluşkimilər
Fəsilə: *Accipitridae* - Quşğullar
Cins: *Aquila* - Qartal
Növ: *Aquila heliaca* - Imperator qartalı
Azərbaycanın dağətəyi rayonlarında, 1000-1500 m yüksəklikli kimi olan ərazilərdə yayılmışdır. Respublikamızda oturaq növdür. Yuvasını əsasən hündür qovaq ağaclarının üzərində, elektrik dirəklərində qurur. Mart-aprel aylarında 2-3, bəzən 4 ədəd yumurta qoyur. Kürtyatma müddəti 43 gündür. Balalar yuvanı 60-65 gündən sonra tərk edirlər. Cinsi yetkinliyi 4-5 yaşlarında çatırlar. Qidasını əsasən sürünənlər, xırda məməlilər və bəzi quşlar təşkil edir.



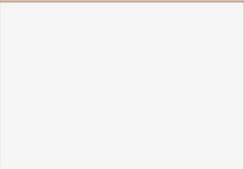
Dəstə: *Falconiformes* - Quzluşkimilər
Fəsilə: *Falconidae* - Quzluşquşlar
Cins: *Falco* - Quzluşquş
Növ: *Falco naumanni* - Çöl muymulu
Azərbaycanın aran və dağətəyi rayonlarında geniş yayılmış yuvalayın quşdur. Ölkəmizə martın axır-mayın birinci yarısında gəlir, sentyabrda isə uçuşu gedir. Düzgün əklində yuvalayır. Yuvalarını əsasən tərk edilmiş binaların, köhnə tikililərin damlarında qurur. Adətən mayın sonu və iyunun 3-5(2-8) ədəd yumurta qoyur. Kürtyatma müddəti 28-29 gündür. Balalar yuvanı 28-30 gündən sonra tərk edirlər. Cinsi yetkinliyi 1-2 yaşlarında çatırlar. Cücülər, bəzən xırda quşlarla, sürünən və məməlilərlə qidalanırlar.



www.aos.az

Azərbaycan Ornitoloji Cəmiyyəti
Qara Qarayev 83/27, Bakı, Azərbaycan
Tel: +994 12 4379087
Fax: +994 12 421 6713
E-mail: info@aos.az



This project is funded by "Conservation Leadership Programme" as a follow up project of "Conservation and Monitoring of Globally Threatened Species in Azerbaijan" which was implemented in 2004-2005. Thanks to Conservation Leadership Programme for their regular support to nature conservation in Azerbaijan. As well thanks to "MME" BirdLife Hungary for their help within this project.

Layihənin həyata keçirilməsi ilkin olaraq işçi qrupunun yaradılması ilə başladı. Komanda üzvləri 2 qrupa ayrılaraq, onlar üçün imperator qartalının və çöl muymulunun tədqiqi ilə bağlı məşğələlər təşkil edildi. Məşğələləri Macarıstandan dsvət edilmiş mütəxəssislər Horvath Marton, Fater Imre və Azərbaycan Ornitoloji Cəmiyyətinin təcrübəli ornitoloqları aparırdı. Bu mərhələdən sonra biz layihə növlərinin tədqiqinə başladığımız. Tədqiqatlarında komanda üzvləri ilə yanaşı təcrübəli ornitoloqlarda iştirak edirdilər. Ümumilikdə 80 günlük çöl tədqiqatı zamanı respublikamız üçün tamamilə yeni olan bir çox elmi məlumatlar əldə edilmiş, imperator qartalının və çöl muymulunun yuva yerləri müəyyən olunmuşdur. Tədqiqatların sonuna layihə növlərinin yuvalama müvəffəqiyyətinin və respublikamızda qüsurunun müntəzəm monitorinqi aparılmışdır. Layihənin həyata keçirilməsi zamanı komanda üzvləri Azərbaycanın bir çox bölgələrində nadir növlərin qorunması ilə bağlı təbliğat tədbirləri həyata keçirmişdir.

The implementation of project started with creating the working groups according to the projects species. Team members divided into two groups for studying the Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel. For having the more effective results we decided to use the international experience on these birds and we invited the experienced ornithologists Horvath Marton and Fater Imre from Hungary. We start our project with training on scientific research of "project species". Surveys started from April 2007. During the project with in 80 days of field work we found 18 new nests of Imperial eagle and 19 new colonies of Lesser Kestrel which was absolutely new for the country. We could cover only 9% of the Azerbaijan territory which allows us to say that the real number of both species is much more and it shows the global importance of Azerbaijan for the "birds of prey". Regular monitoring of the project sites was done during the project implementation. Within this project first time in Azerbaijan we study the nesting sites and breeding success of the project species. Beside the scientific research our team did the public awareness activities at all the project sites and meet with many local authorities for the protection of birds in Azerbaijan.



Çöl muymulunun tədqiqi məqsədi ilə 2007-ci ilin may ayından etibarən potensial yuvalama yerlərinin öyrənilməsinə başlanıldı. Bunun üçün ilkin olaraq Mərkəzi aran zonasında yerləşən Ağcabədi, Kürdəmir, Zərdab, İmişli, Biləsuvar, Salyan və Neftçala rayonlarında tədqiqat aparıldı. Tədqiqatların nəticəsi olaraq adları çəkilən ərazilərdə 19 yeni koloniyə müəyyən olunmuşdur. Bu koloniyələrdə yuvaların ümumi sayı isə təxminən 300-dür. Koloniyaların əksər hissəsi binaların və istifadə olunmayan ferma tikililərinin damlarında, bir ərazidə isə ağacların kəməndində qeyd olunmuşdur. Layihə müddətində yuvaların ətrafı tədqiqi aparılmış, yuvalama müvəffəqiyyəti öyrənilmişdir. Bütün bu elmi məlumatlar Azərbaycan Ornitoloji Cəmiyyətinin elmi məlumat bazasına daxil edilmişdir. Tədqiqat aparılan ərazilərdə və buraya yaxın yaşayış məntəqələrində çöl muymulunun və digər nadir növlərin qorunması ilə bağlı bir çox tədbirlər aparılmış, öyrədi materiallar yerli əhaliyə paylanmışdır.



İmperator qartalının tədqiqi məqsədi ilə 2007-ci ilin aprel ayından başlayaraq respublikamızın şimal-qərb rayonlarından - Göyçay, Ağdas, Qəbələ, Səki və Qax rayonlarında ətrafı tədqiqatlar aparılmışdır. Tədqiqatlar nəticəsində bu ərazidə 18 yeni yuva, 5 yeni fəal ərazi müəyyən edilmişdir. Layihə ərzində ümumilikdə 25 yuva tədqiq olunmuşdur. Yuva yerlərindən lələkdəyişmə zamanı fəal müvəffəqiyyətinin öyrənilməsi üçün yuva yerlərinə ekspedisiya təşkil olunmuş və cavan fərdlərin sayışı aparılmışdır. Həmin illərin ərzində də sayışı aparılmışdır. Əldə edilmiş məlumatlar Azərbaycan Ornitoloji Cəmiyyətinin elmi məlumat bazasına daxil edilmişdir. Layihə çərçivəsində imperator qartalının qorunmasını əhali arasında təbliğat məqsədi ilə hazırlanmış materiallar yerli sakinlərə paylanmış, bir sıra digər tədbirlər, eləcə də mətbəhblər arasında yarışlar həyata keçirilmişdir.






Discussions and Recommendations

On 21 July 2007 project team members, staff of Azerbaijan Ornithological Society, ornithologists from Institute of Zoology of National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan Republic and members of national Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel groups met for discussing the project results. Results as well discussed with international experts Horvath Marton, Fater Imre and with members of Imperial Eagle working groups.

Surveys of Imperial Eagle during the project implementation provided many important data on the status of this species in Azerbaijan, since the 30 exactly located breeding territories in 7% of the country's area is more than the most recent estimates for the whole country (20-25 pairs in Sultanov et al., 2006). It is also very promising that the observed territory structure reveals a stable population.

All together during the 98.5 hours of fieldwork 65 imperial eagle observations were made of at least 51 different specimens, so it was the 3rd most frequently seen raptor in the region (after common buzzard and common kestrel).

Based on the survey's data and on the amount of potential breeding habitats we are estimating a population of 35-60 breeding pairs for the 6000 sq km study area in North-western Azerbaijan. We can not estimate accurately the whole country's population, but it became certain that it is multiple of any previously published estimations.

Surveys of Lesser Kestrel within this project allowed us to say that the country hold important number of breeding colonies of this species. With in 90 hours of field work 560 individual birds were counted.

Based on survey's data and on the amount of potential breeding habitats we are estimating a population of 500 breeding pairs for the 5500 sq km study area in Middle part of the Azerbaijan. Individual birds registered every where on the survey routs allows us to say that the whole country population is much more than the available date for the time being.

The large number of other rare raptor species (both migrating and breeding), also enhances the importance to increase the activity of raptor monitoring and conservation actions in Azerbaijan.

Surveys carried out during the project for both species shows that it is necessary to continue the research of Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel in Azerbaijan. The Imperial Eagle and Lesser Kestrel groups created during the project implementation will continue the monitoring of breeding areas and public awareness activities for improving the conservation status of both species in Azerbaijan.

➤ **Final report produced**

Financial report is attached to the project report