

Latin name	Falco tinnunculus
Common Kestrel	
Lesser Kestrel	
Migratory behaviour	Long-distance migrant, overwinters in Africa
Occurrence in Europe	March-September
Plumage (male)	Uniformly reddish back mantle, grey/blue head, wide grey band in the middle of the wing
Plumage (female)	Brownish/White with black dots
Claws	White
Diet	Insects, small reptiles, rodents
Nesting	Constitute colonies of 2-40 breeding pairs
Habitat	Confined to agricultural habitats, rarely occurs above the 500 m.a.s.l.
	Diffused almost in any environment breeds from 0 to almost 2,500 m.a.s.l.

## How does the Lesser (and the Common) Kestrel look like?



photo Nunzio Grattini

photo Nunzio Grattini

photo: Franco Aresi

**LIFE FALKON**  
LIFE on the move



[www.lifefalcon.eu](http://www.lifefalcon.eu)



LIFE FALKON aims at fostering the resilience of the central-eastern European Lesser Kestrel population to climate change, improving the conservation status of Italian and Greek populations breeding at the north-eastern margin of breeding distribution range. The project started in July 2018 and it will end in December 2023.

The partners involved are CNR-IRSA National Research Council - Water Research Institute (coordinator), ISPRA - Istituto Superiore Protezione e Ricerca Ambientale, Università Statale di Milano, HOS/Birdlife Hellenic Ornithological Society, ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy.



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## Objectives of the LIFE FALKON Project

- Foster the resilience of the central-eastern European population to climate change, improving the conservation status of Italian and Greek populations;
- Improve foraging and nesting habitat quality in intensive farmland areas and SPAs where the species breeds in the project areas;
- Establish a collaborative international network; Promote public awareness concerning the Lesser Kestrel and biodiversity conservation, with emphasis on environmental education;
- Obtain an accurate assessment of the conservation status of those populations crucial for the northward breeding expansion.

photo: Life Falcon team



LIFE FALKON Team ringing a newborn Lesser Kestrel

## How does the LIFE FALKON Project help the Lesser Kestrel?

- ✓ Provide nest-boxes and nesting towers to foster the settlement of Lesser Kestrel;
- ✓ Implement communication actions addressed to key stakeholders (architects, geometricians, farmers) and decision makers;
- ✓ Share experiences with conservation experts and beneficiaries of previous LIFE projects targeting Lesser Kestrel;
- ✓ Implement a large scale public awareness campaign;
- ✓ Set up standardised monitoring protocols providing maps of breeding sites, suitability maps for both breeding and foraging needs.

Male Lesser Kestrel with a GPS device



photo: Life Falcon team

## Why another LIFE Project on the Lesser Kestrel?

The target species of the project is the Lesser Kestrel, a trans-Saharan migratory raptor which mainly breeds in Mediterranean countries. This species suffered a **dramatic population decline during the last century**, due to changes in farming practices and climate change. The Lesser Kestrel is nowadays a species of EU priority interest because of its unfavourable conservation status.

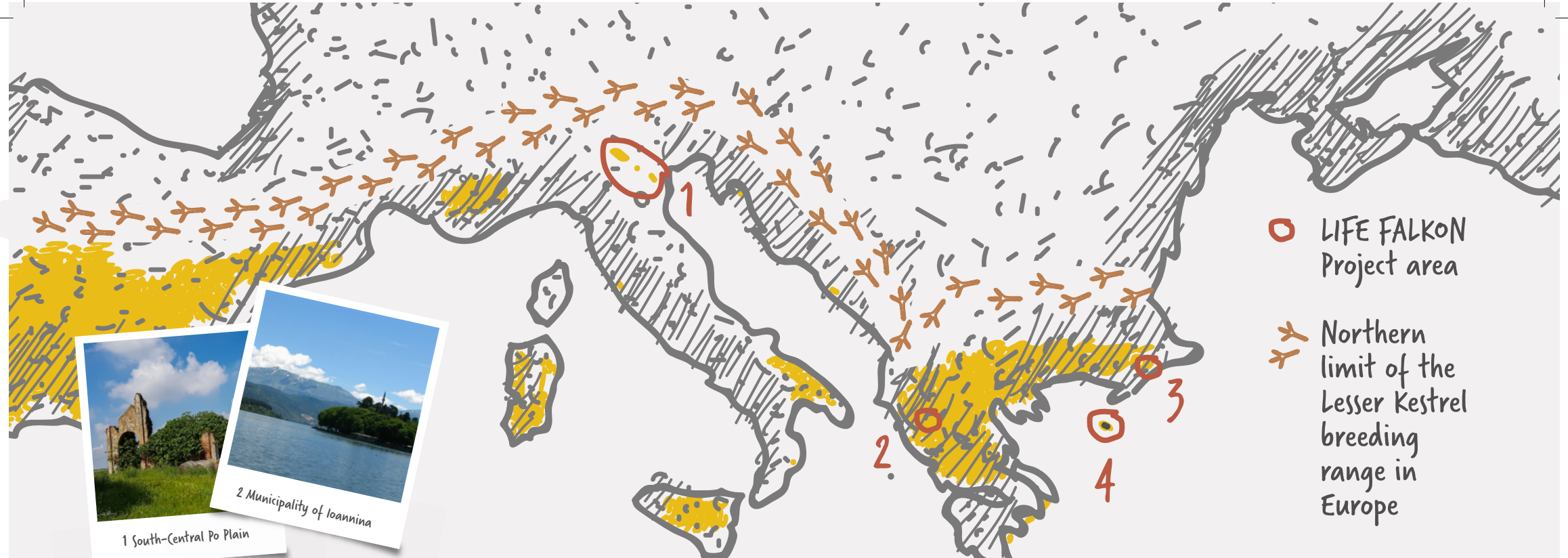
The focus of LIFE FALKON are **the populations settled at the northern edge of its current distribution range**. Due to climate change, Lesser Kestrel will suffer a range contraction in the Southern breeding range while could expand towards the North-East in the near future. The Central-Eastern Mediterranean region will thus play a crucial role for any future northward expansion, which will likely be triggered by those populations located at the North-Eastern border of the current range. However, the persistence of these small and isolated populations is currently negatively affected by both intrinsic (e.g. small population size) and extrinsic (e.g. destruction of nest sites) factors.

The **main objective** of LIFE FALKON is thus to **foster the resilience of the species to climate change by improving the conservation status of Italian and Greek populations breeding at the north-eastern edge of the breeding range**.



photo: Luca Eberle





**1**  
South-Central Po Plain (Italy)  
70 breeding pairs of Lesser Kestrel

**2**  
Wider area of Municipality of Ioannina (Greece)  
35-45 pairs of Lesser Kestrel

**3**  
Wider area of Municipality of Komotini (Greece)  
50-60 pairs of Lesser Kestrel

**4**  
Island of Lemnos (Greece)  
130 pairs of Lesser Kestrel

## LIFE FALKON IN NUMBERS



66 Months of project



5 Partners  
CNR-IRSA, ALDA, ISPRA, VMIL, HoS

In each area the LIFE FALKON Team will:



Install nest boxes



Involve local stakeholders



Implement awareness raising actions



Additionally, in Project Area 1 nesting towers will be built



Main Challenge:  
Safeguarding the Lesser Kestrel and foster its expansion towards north



Lesser Kestrel dramatically declined in the second half of the 20th century (-91%) and only showed a mild recovery after the 2000. With LIFE FALKON we foster the small northern populations and thus the global recovery of the species.

