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NEWSLETTER

March/April 2023

LIFE EUROKITE

(LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048)




MEGEG





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„LIFE EUROKITE is an important project that aims to effectively protect particularly threatened species and will contribute to the protection of biodiversity in Europe.

As Chair of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals, I am committed to the protection of all animals and I applaud the efforts of this project.”

Tilly Metz

**Since 2018 Member of the European
Parliament – Luxembourg
Group of the Greens/European Free
Alliance**



The breeding season has started

Spring is here and the red kites that are breeding are currently in the very sensitive incubation period. This also applies to the small population of red kites in southern Spain. Any human disturbance at or near the nest, strong storms or other factors can cause the brood to fail and the breeding process to end. Red kites belong to the monogamous species (seasonal or permanent marriage). During the mating season you can observe spectacular flight maneuvers of the red kites in the air. These range from synchronous flights to spin flights. In the latter, the partners grab each other's talons and tumble to the ground from a height of several hundred meters.

The photo shows a breeding pair in the Extremadura region of south-west Spain. This breeding pair bred successfully last year and seems to have found each other again this year. We are excited to see how things will continue and hope to have offspring soon.



The excursion of a released red kite



Since the summer of 2022, the red kite released in the LIFE EUROKITE, which are still too young to breed, have been flying around in large parts of the south-west of the Iberian Peninsula and exploring the surroundings not too far away from the releasing area.

In contrast, a male red kite that was released back into the wild in the summer of 2022 has now started a larger excursion. Since it was released back into the wild, it was more or less constantly flying in the releasing area until it decided to fly to southern Portugal at the beginning of April. An area where, unfortunately, the illegal use of poison poses a major threat to the red kites.

The reintroduced red kite flew around for more than 3 weeks and also reached the southwest Atlantic coast of Portugal, south of the town of Sines. During this time it was observed and identified by several ornithologists and bird watchers in the municipality of Castro Verde. One of these ornithologists, Paulo Almeida, was able to take excellent photos of the red kite. A few days after Paulo's observation, the red kite was rediscovered by cameras at the feeding station in the reintroduction area.

This is excellent news in more ways than one. Monitoring by GPS shows us how the released red kites, even if they leave the areas on excursions of hundreds of kilometres, return, knowing by their memory and their own navigation where they were released. On the other hand, the observations and photos taken by bird watchers, ornithologists, biologists, etc. are an excellent tool, not only for conservation, but also for raising awareness and involving the local people in the project. Thus, all information about the bird can be collected and evaluated.

Therefore we welcome all bird watchers to southern Portugal and the Iberian Peninsula in the south-west to see the released red kites in the wild and to be a part of the LIFE EUROKITE project.

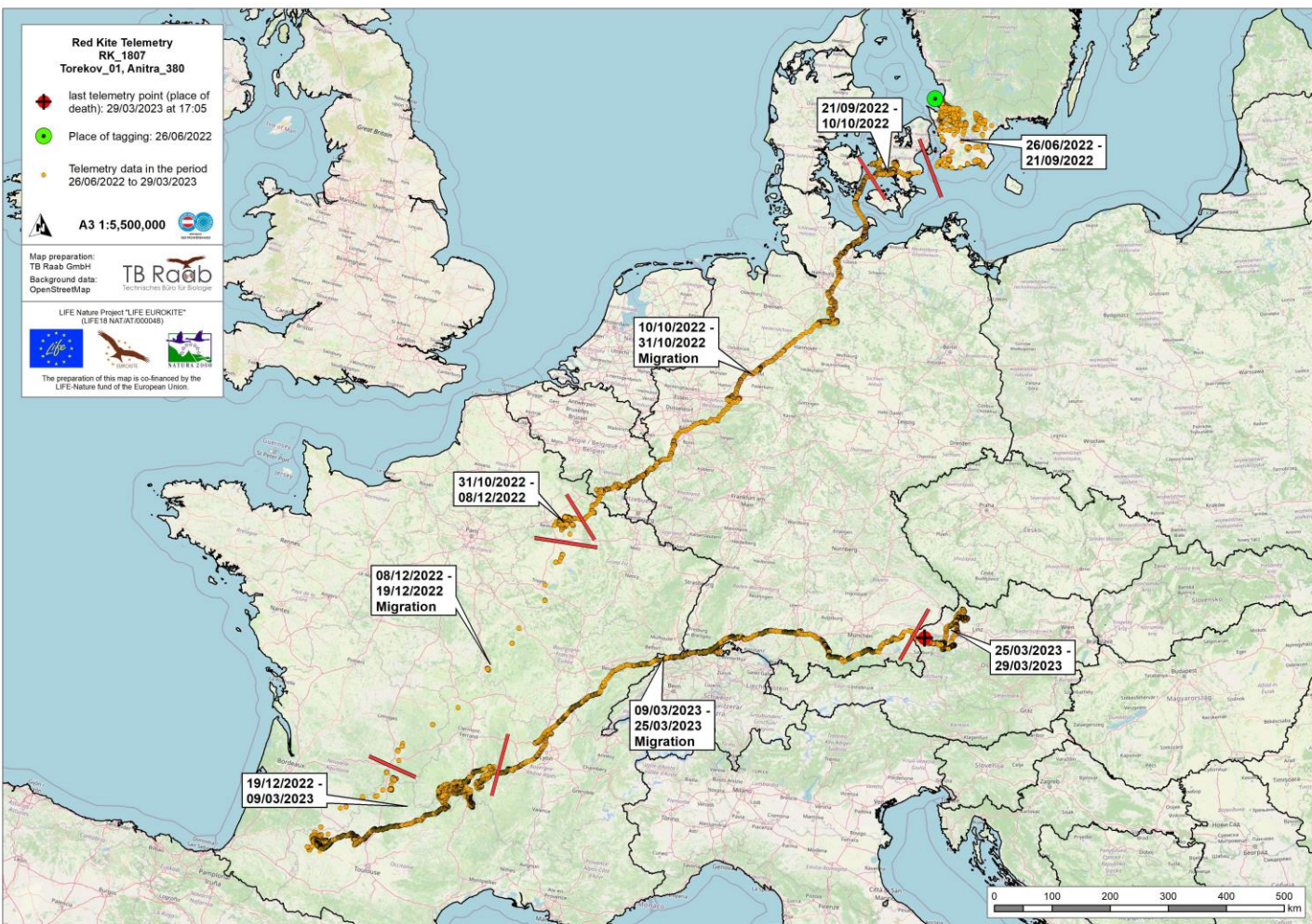


Wildlifecrime in Upper Austria – Tagged red kite disappeared

At the edge of a forest in Upper Austria, the GPS transmitter sent its last location on April 5th. It was found tied to the remains of a domestic pigeon with a cable tie. The red kite itself has disappeared.

In the course of the LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048), red kites have been tagged all over Europe since 2020. The core idea is to use telemetry data to determine red kite habitat use and to quantify the main causes of red kite mortality in the EU. The red kite and other raptor species are highly endangered by illegal activities. The missing red kite also appears to have been the victim of illegal activity.

Torekov_01 was tagged as a nestling in Sweden on June 26th, 2022 by the LIFE EUROKITE tagging team in cooperation with the University of Lund. At the end of September, Torekov_01 started its southward migration and spent the winter in France until March. At the beginning of March, Torekov_01 flew back north and decided to fly to Upper Austria. There the red kite spent only 4 days before becoming a victim of illegal activity.



Based on the GPS transmitter, which regularly sends data, it was quickly determined that the red kite had died. Members of the LIFE EUROKITE team acted quickly and contacted BirdLife Austria to initiate the search for the bird. The transmitter was found, tied to a pigeon's foot, but the red kite itself has disappeared. Unfortunately, we have to assume a wildlife crime in this case. The police have taken over and are investigating.



The transmitter was found, tied to a pigeon's foot, but the red kite itself has disappeared. © Florian Billinger / BirdLife Österreich

Current information and press releases about this case can be found under the following link (German).

<https://www.life-eurokite.eu/en/our-birds/media/press-releases.html>

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Project partner (Associated Beneficiary)



Co-financier



Cooperation partner



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