



HELICON - Conservation of imperial eagles by managing human-eagle conflicts in Hungary

LIFE10 NAT/HU/000019



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Project description:

Background

The eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) is a globally threatened Eurasian bird species, with a world population of only a few thousand breeding pairs. Hungary is home to the largest population in the EU – in 2010, 62% of the species was found in the country, including 117 nesting pairs. Since the 1980s, the population has been slowly increasing in Hungary, but this small population is still vulnerable due to the limited number and quality of available habitats.

The conservation status of the imperial eagle in Hungary is seriously threatened by the exponential increase in deliberate killings: poisoning began in 2005 and shooting is also a problem. A total of 54 imperial eagles are believed to have been killed in the past few years – 23.1% of the national and 14.2% of the EU breeding population in 2010. Such killings threaten to reverse the positive population trend of the imperial eagle in Hungary and in neighbouring countries.

Objectives

The main objective of the HELICON project was to improve the conservation status of the eastern imperial eagle population in Hungary by significantly reducing non-natural deaths caused by persecution incidents.

The project specifically aimed to decrease the direct negative effects of persecution incidents on the Hungarian imperial eagle population by setting up a

veterinary system and best-practice protocol, satellite tracking, nest guarding at key Natura 2000 network sites (SPAs), providing safe feeding places and constructing artificial nests.

HELICON also proposed to increase the chances of detecting illegal activities and imposing criminal sentences by conducting field surveys, setting up a hotline, creating a bird-crime database, establishing a protocol for investigating incidents, setting up an anti-bird-crime action group and educating stakeholders.

The project was designed to increase stakeholder awareness of the overestimated impact of raptor species on game populations and of alternative eagle-friendly game management methods.

Another aim was to increase public awareness of the importance of imperial eagle conservation and of the possible consequences of persecution incidents.

Results

The HELICON project successfully met its objectives and ultimately maintained a steady growth of the eastern imperial eagle population in Hungary. While the national population of the imperial eagle was stable at the beginning of the project between 2012 and 2014, it showed a significant (36%) increase by 2015-2016, reaching 205 occupied nests in 2016.

Cases of poisoning were detected and prosecuted more effectively, while the annual number of detected bird crime incidents fell by an average of 37% in the last three years of the project. This was achieved by laying a firm basis for anti-poisoning activities by creating protocols, a working group and the first anti-poison dog unit in the region. The project purchased 10 farmyards (total area 5.35 hectares) and transformed them into optimal breeding environments for imperial eagles through game and eagle-friendly habitat management.

A visitor centre was set up as the main facility for sustained project actions. The centre hosts exhibitions for the general public and serves as a scientific centre for conservationists working in the region. It also acts as a regional refuge for injured strictly protected species.

Helped by the popularity of the topic, the project made a substantial number of people in Hungary and abroad more aware of the imperial eagle, bird crimes - including deliberate poisoning, and the related conservation challenges. HELICON attracted nearly half a million unique visitors to its website.

The project drafted a conservation management plan of the sample area and this was approved by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture. It also set up and trained a highly valuable anti-poisoning network of stakeholders, which includes conservationists, hunters, veterinarians, farmers, police, prosecutors and judges.

HELICON established the first multi-partner collaboration and the first field dog unit for Central Europe to detect, investigate and mitigate wildlife crime, particularly illegal poisoning.

The project showed the benefits of eagle and small game-friendly habitat management to hunters, who are a key stakeholder group in the illegal poisoning

issue. It also demonstrated to farmers that the best practices of eagle and small game-friendly habitat management can bring in EU rural agri-environmental funding, as an alternative to direct agricultural payments in less productive agricultural areas.

The project was highly relevant to the implementation of the Birds and Habitat Directives and agri-environmental schemes, as the project's conservation management aimed to improve the conservation status of Natura 2000 habitats and that of the eastern Imperial eagle.

Further information on the project can be found in the project's layman report and After-LIFE Conservation Plan (see "Read more" section).

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Species - Birds

Keywords

endangered species, protected area, restoration measure, conflicting use

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 79/409 - Conservation of wild birds (02.04.1979)
- Directive 2009/147 - Conservation of wild birds - Birds Directive (codified version of Directive ...
- COM(2011) 244 final "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 ...

Target species

Aquila heliaca

Natura 2000 sites

SPAHUBN10002 Borsodi-sík

SPAHUBN10003 Bükk-hegység és peremterületei

SPAHUBN10004 Hevesi-sík

SPAHUBN10006 Mátra

SPAHUBN10007 Zempléni-hegység a Szerencsi-dombsággal és a Hernád-völgyel

SPAHUDI10003 Gerecse
SPAHUDI10004 Jászkarajenői puszták
SCI HUDI30001 Vértes
SPAHUFH10001 Fertő tó
SPAHUFH10004 Mosoni-sík
SCI HUFH30005 Hanság
SPAHUHN10002Hortobágy
SPAHUHN10003Bihar
SPAHUHN10004Közép-Tisza
SPAHUHN10005Jászság
SPAHUKM10001Kígyósi-puszta
SPAHUKM10003Dévaványai-sík
SPAHUKM10004Hódmezővásárhely környéki és csanádi-háti puszták
SPAHUKM10005Cserebökényi-puszták
SPAHUKN10007Alsó-Tisza-völgy
SCI HUAN20004Hernád-völgy és Sajóládi-erdő
SCI HUAN20006Sajó-völgy
SCI HUBN20001 Bükk-fennsík és a Lök-völgy
SCI HUBN20009 Tard környéki erdőssztyepp
SCI HUBN20010 Szomolyai Kaptár-rét
SCI HUBN20017 Borsodbótai Kotyindó-tető
SCI HUBN20018 Upponyi-szoros
SCI HUBN20025 Nagybarcai Liget-hegy és sajóvelezdi Égett-hegy
SCI HUBN20034 Borsodi-Mezőség
SCI HUBN20035 Poroszlói szikések
SCI HUBN20037 Nagy-Hanyi
SCI HUBN20039 Pusztafogacs
SCI HUBN20041 Pélyi szikések
SCI HUBN20044 Recski Hegyes-hegy
SCI HUBN20047 Mátra északi letörése
SCI HUBN20051 Nyugat-Mátra
SCI HUBN20068 Sajómercsei Körtvélyes-dűlő
SCI HUBN20073 Bodrogszegi Várhegy
SCI HUBN20074 Tállyai Patócs-hegy - Sátor-hegy
SCI HUBN20077 Erdőbényei - olaszliszkai magyar nőszirmos sztyepprétek
SCI HUBN20082 Felsőregmeci Ronyva
SCI HUBN20084 Központi-Zempléni-hegység
SCI HUBN20085 Északi-Zempléni-hegység
SCI HUBN20087 Baskói rétek
SCI HUBN20090 Komlóscai Mogyorós-tető és Zsidó-rét
SCI HUBN20092 Telkibányai Király-hegy
SCI HUBN20093 Bózsmai Temető alja
SCI HUDI20015 Déli-Gerecse
SCI HUDI20030 Központi-Gerecse
SCI HUHN20003Tisza-tó
SCI HUHN20070Darvasi Csiff-puszta
SCI HUHN20076Borsóhalmi-legelő
SCI HUHN20093Kaba-földesi gyepek
SCI HUHN20098Dél-ásványi gyepek
SCI HUHN20100Gatály
SCI HUHN20103Berekböszörmény - körmösdpusztai legelők
SCI HUHN20105Csökmői gyepek

SCI HUKM20003T-erdő
SCI HUKM20004Száráz-ér
SCI HUKM20010Gyula-szabadjígyósi gyepek
SCI HUKM20015Hortobágy-Berettyó
SCI HUKM20019Dél-Bihari szikések
SCI HUKM20027Cserebökény
SCI HUKM20028Tókei gyepek
SCI HUKM20030Lapistó-Fertő
SCI HUKM20031Kurca
SCI HUDI20020 Gerecse
SCI HUFH20002 Fertő tó
SCI HUHN20002Hortobágy
SCI HUHN20015Közép-Tisza

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	MME BirdLife Hungary
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	MME BirdLife Hungary (Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society) is a private, non-commercial body, founded in 1974 to protect birds and their natural environment. Since then, its activities have expanded from surveys to active conservation work and nature conservation lobbying. In 2010 it had more than 25 000 members (9 768 active in 32 local groups). The organisation focuses mainly on protecting birds of prey, bird ringing, migration, protecting reptiles and amphibians, species protection programmes, habitat protection projects and education. MME has coordinated the monitoring and conservation of the imperial eagle in Hungary since its foundation and it is also the coordinator of the International Imperial Eagle Working Group (1990).
Partners	Hortobágy National Park Directorate, Hungary Körös-Maros National Park Directorate, Hungary Bükk National Park Directorate, Hungary Budapest Zoo and Botanical Garden, Hungary Zoological Park and Botanical Garden of Jászberény, Hungary Hungarian Hunters' National Chamber, Hungary Hungarian National Bureau of Investigation, Hungary FILMJUNGLE.EU Society, Hungary

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE10 NAT/HU/000019
Duration	01-JAN-2012 to 31-DEC -2016
Total budget	2,141,597.00 €
EU contribution	1,606,198.00 €
Project location	Kozep-Dunantul(Hungary Magyarország) Nyugat-Dunantul(Hungary Magyarország) Eszak-Magyarország(Hungary Magyarország) Eszak-Alfold(Hungary Magyarország) Del-Alfold(Hungary Magyarország)

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Read more:

Brochure	Title: "A Magas Természeti Értékű Területek Támogatási Lehetőségei: Tájékoztató Füzet Gazdálkodóknak" (2.24 MB) Author: Králl Attila, Tóth Péter Year: 2015 Editor: Földművelésügyi Minisztérium Nemzeti Parki No of pages: 13
Leaflet	Title: "A parlagi sasok védelme a Jászság Különleges Madárvédelmi Területen = The conservation of imperial eagles in the Jászság Special Protection Area" (7.06 MB) Editor: HELICON No of pages: 1
Poster	Title: "Madárbarát Gazdálkodás: gyepen, erdön, halastavon, szántón" (21.1 MB) Year: 2015 Editor: HELICON No of pages: 1
Poster	Title: "A sasbarát Magyarországért = For an eagle-friendly Hungary: Parlagi sas = Eastern imperial eagle" (823 KB) Editor: HELICON No of pages: 1
Project web site	Project's website
Project web site - 2	Project's Facebook page
Publication: After-LIFE Conservation Plan	Title: After-LIFE Conservation Plan Author: Márton HORVÁTH Year: 2016 Editor: BirdLife Hungary No of pages: 16
Publication: After-LIFE Conservation Plan	Title: After-LIFE Conservation Plan (Hungarian version) Year: 2016 Editor: BirdLife Hungary No of pages: 17

Publication: Case study	Title: "Ragadozómadarak mérgezése és védelme Magyarországon Ismeretek és attitűdök" (4.68 MB) Year: 2013 Editor: MEDIAN No of pages: 10
Publication: Case study	Title: "JAVASLAT: a JÁSZSÁG Magas Természeti Értékű Terület (MTÉT) megvalósítására" (6.58 MB) Author: Králl Attila (ed.) Year: 2013 Editor: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület No of pages: 47
Publication: Case study	Title: "A Jászság SPA fenntartási tervének részvételi tervezéséről és kommunikációját megalapozó tanulmány" (300 KB) Author: Fabók Veronika, Kalóczkai Ágnes, Kovács Eszter Year: 2013 Editor: Környezeti Társadalomkutatók (ESSRG) No of pages: 34
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Terepi madárhatározó vadgazdálkodóknak" (4.37 MB) Author: Bíró István, Tóth Péter (ed.) Editor: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület No of pages: 34
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Anti-poisoning working group of the Hungarian raptor conservation council: Procedure protocol package, part 3/1: Field investigation protocol if bird crime is suspected" (566 KB) Year: 2010 Editor: Magyar Ragadozómadár-védelmi tanács No of pages: 2
Publication: Guidelines-Manual	Title: "Anti-poisoning working group of the Hungarian raptor conservation council: Procedure protocol package, part 3/2: Veterinary protocol: Established protocol for examining and using therapy to treat injured or dead birds of prey" (222 KB) Author: Endre Sós (editor) Year: 2014 Editor: Magyar Ragadozómadár-védelmi tanács No of pages: 4
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report Year: 2016 Editor: BirdLife Hungary - HELICON project No of pages: 15
Publication: Pedagogical tool	Title: "Jászság Kerékpáros Tanösvény = Jászság Bicycle Nature Trail" (20.6 MB) Editor: HELICON No of pages: 10
Publication: Pedagogical tool	Title: "Jászság - a parlagi sasok birodalma = Jászság - Kingdom of the Imperial Eagle" (16.2 MB) Editor: HELICON No of pages: 10
Publication: Research findings	Title: "Az apróvad állomány és a ragadozógazdálkodás helyzete Magyarországon" (2.99 MB) Author: Csányi Sándor, Szemethy László (ed.) Year: 2013 Editor: SZENT ISTVÁN EGYETEM No of pages: 137

- Publication: Technical report Title: "Módszertani tanulmány „A parlagi sas védelme Magyarországon” című LIFE (LIFENAT/HU/019) pályázathoz" (908 KB) Author: Heltai Miklós, Biró Zsolt, Szabó László, ... [et a Year: 2013 Editor: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület No of pages: 32
- Publication: Technical report Title: "Zárójelentés: Készült „A parlagi sas védelme Magyarországon” c. LIFE10NAT/HU/019 LIFE+Nature programhoz" (3.70 MB) Author: Csányi Sándor, Szemethy László (ed.) Year: 2016 Editor: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület No of pages: 45
- Publication: Technical report Title: Project's Final technical report Year: 2016 Editor: HELICON No of pages: 101
- Publication: Technical report Title: "A JÁSZSÁG különleges madárvédelmi terület (HUHN10005) Natura 2000 fenntartási terve" (14.7 MB) Year: 2015 Editor: Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület No of pages: 116
- Publication: Technical report Title: "Módszertani tanulmány „A parlagi sas védelme Magyarországon” című LIFE (LIFENAT/HU/019): pályázathoz: Jelentés" (908 KB) Author: Csányi Sándor, Szemethy László (ed.) Year: 2013 Editor: SZENT ISTVÁN EGYETEM No of pages: 32
- Slides Presentation Title: "Fight against the illegal poisoning of predators in Hungary" (8.13 MB) Author: Márton HORVÁTH, Gábor DEÁK, Imre FATÉR, ...[et al] Year: 2016 Editor: HELICON, Mavir Bird Conservation Conference No of pages: 45

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