

RAPTOR MIGRATION AT PANTELLERIA ISLAND (TRAPANI, SICILY): RESULTS OF "PROGETTO RAPACI MIGRATORI - LIPU" 2004-2011

ANDREA CORSO¹ & MARCO GUSTIN²

¹MISC, Via Camastra 10, 96100 Siracusa, voloerrante@yahoo.it; ²Dipartimento Conservazione LIPU, via Trento 49, 43100 Parma

KEY WORDS: RAPTOR MIGRATION, PANTELLERIA, SICILY, 2004-2011

Riassunto Dal 2004 al 2011 nell'isola di Pantelleria sono stati osservati 28.593 rapaci e 46 cicogne, con un minimo di 1.624 rapaci nel 2005 e un massimo di 8.809 nel 2009 (media 3.575). La specie più abbondante è risultata il Falco pecchiaiolo con 26.215 individui (min-max: 1.326-8.550; media 3.277).

We present the results of the study "Progetto Rapaci migratori - LIPU" carried out at the island of Pantelleria, northern Sicilian Channel (Trapani, Sicily) between spring 2004 and 2011. Data regarding pre-breeding migration are given, while only a single year data on post-breeding movements has been collected (2008) but not included in this preliminary work. We present here preliminary data, while a more extensive paper will be published in the future.

Data have been collected each year from 20th April to 20th of May. Data on sex and age of raptors have been also collected and are here reported for some sample species, as well data on altitude of arrival, direction of arrival and of disappearing from the observation posts, weather condition, wind direction and intensity and so on. However, only a summary of the most relevant data is presented here. Data were collected from 5 main observatory depending on wind direction and weather condition: i) Aeroporto di Pantelleria - piani di Rukhia; ii) Acropoli Pantelleria; iii) Kuddia di Mida; iv) Punta Fram; v) Scauri. When there is NW wind, cloudy day or a rain front over the Sicilian Channel, raptors are observed entering the island from W/NW/N, having decided not to cross the channel directly (Premuda et al., 2007), with sunny day and light N/NW/NE wind Kuddia di Mida is the best observation spot while with more or less strong SE wind Scauri and Punta Fram are the best spots.

We recorded all the flocks compositions, plumage details, individual variations in order to avoid double counting; for the same reason we only recorded raptors arriving from the same "entering path" into the island of any single day migration flow. From the data we excluded the following species: *Buteo buteo*, *B.b. vulpinus*, *Buteo rufinus*. In fact, on the island there are breeding or summering *Buteo buteo* and *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*, plus hybridisation between these species has been proven (Corso, 2009); therefore, it was evaluated too difficult to distinguish between local birds and passing birds. Same has been done with *Falco tinnunculus*. *Aquila pennata* also breed on the island with a single pair at least since 2004, but the individual birds of the pair are known and the moult pattern, age and plumage characters helped to distinguish them from the passing birds.

We recorded a total of 28593 raptors and 46 storks, minimum of 1624 raptors on 2005 and a maximum of 8809 in 2009, with an average of 3575 during the eight pre-breeding migrations considered (Tab.1). The most common species is Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* with a total of 26215 (min.- max.: 1326-8550; average 3277): about 75% of the 12000 aged birds were full adults with 25% being in their 3rd cy; a single juv. returning in its 2nd cy has been identified (Corso, in prep.). Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is the second most common species with 1007 birds in total (min.- max.: 51-265; average 126); Black Kite *Milvus migrans* is the 3rd species in order of abundance with 605 birds (min.-max.: 16-199; average 76); Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* is also common with 303 birds (min.-max.: 3-186; average 38): during the spring 2011 we counted

186 but some other 300+ birds were counted by some birders from early April till 20th when we started, in fact a major influx of this species, as in the year 2000, was noticed in Central Mediterranean during April 2011 with no less than 200 birds in a day nearby Siracusa on 16th April (Corso & Small, ined.), and hundreds at the Eolian islands in the same days. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* has been also counted in good number: 159 (min.max.: 1-42; average 20), mainly resting and hunting into the Airport area. Among the rarest species, we recorded 4 Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* which is in our opinion a regular though very scarce migrant, 1 Eastern Imperial Eagle on May 2010, 1 adult male North African Lanner *Falco biarmicus erlangeri* on 2006 (one of the very few Italian records – Corso, 2005). For what concern storks, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* is a very scarce migrant during pre-breeding movement (many more during the post-breeding – Corso, ined.), with 21 birds in total in only 2 years, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* is more regular with few birds every spring (but in 2004) and a total of 25.

Acknowledgements - We are particularly grateful to LIPU-UK for funding at this project.

References

- CORSO A 2005, AVIFAUNA DI SICILIA. L'EPOS, PALERMO; CORSO A 2009, DUTCH BIRDING 31: 224-226, 2009; CORSO A. IN PREP. HOW MANY 2ND CALENDAR-YEAR HONEY BUZZARD MIGRATE IN SPRING OVER MEDITERRANEAN AND WESTERN PALEARCTIC?; PREMUDA G 2007. RIV. ITAL. ORN. 77 (2): 143-146.