

Implementation of the SakerGAP: A Conservation Success in Hungary



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What is SakerGAP?

- ▶ International Action Plan under CMS (2015-2024)
- ▶ Goal: secure viable populations across the species' range
- ▶ Hungary is a key stronghold of the species



Global distribution of the Saker Falcon



Source: BirdLife International

The Saker falcon in Hungary



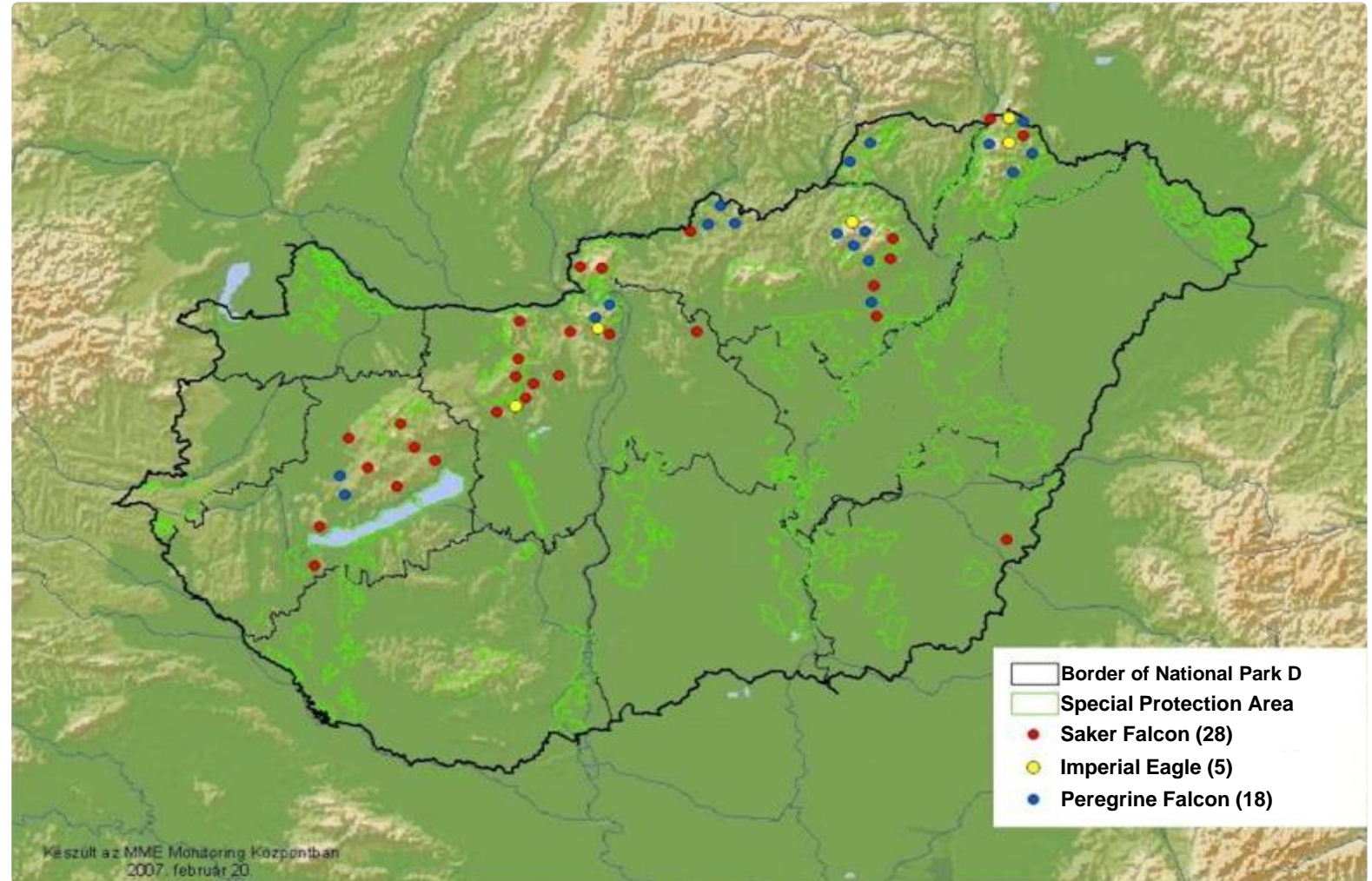
- ▶ Mythological bird, national symbol of Hungarians
- ▶ Strictly protected by law
- ▶ Any activities can only be permitted for nature conservation purposes
- ▶ Keeping, breeding etc. prohibited
- ▶ Not allowed for falconry use (even hybrids)



Historical distribution range of the Saker Falcon (1949-1950)

1900:
regular, but not common

1950 - 1970:
brink of extinction



Source: BirdLife Hungary

Threats

- ▶ Electrocution
- ▶ Poisoning
- ▶ Collision
- ▶ Shooting
- ▶ Avian flu
- ▶ Other disease
- ▶ Land use change - availability of prey
- ▶ Illegal take

Known causes of mortality of Saker Falcons in Hungary (2010-2019, n=37)

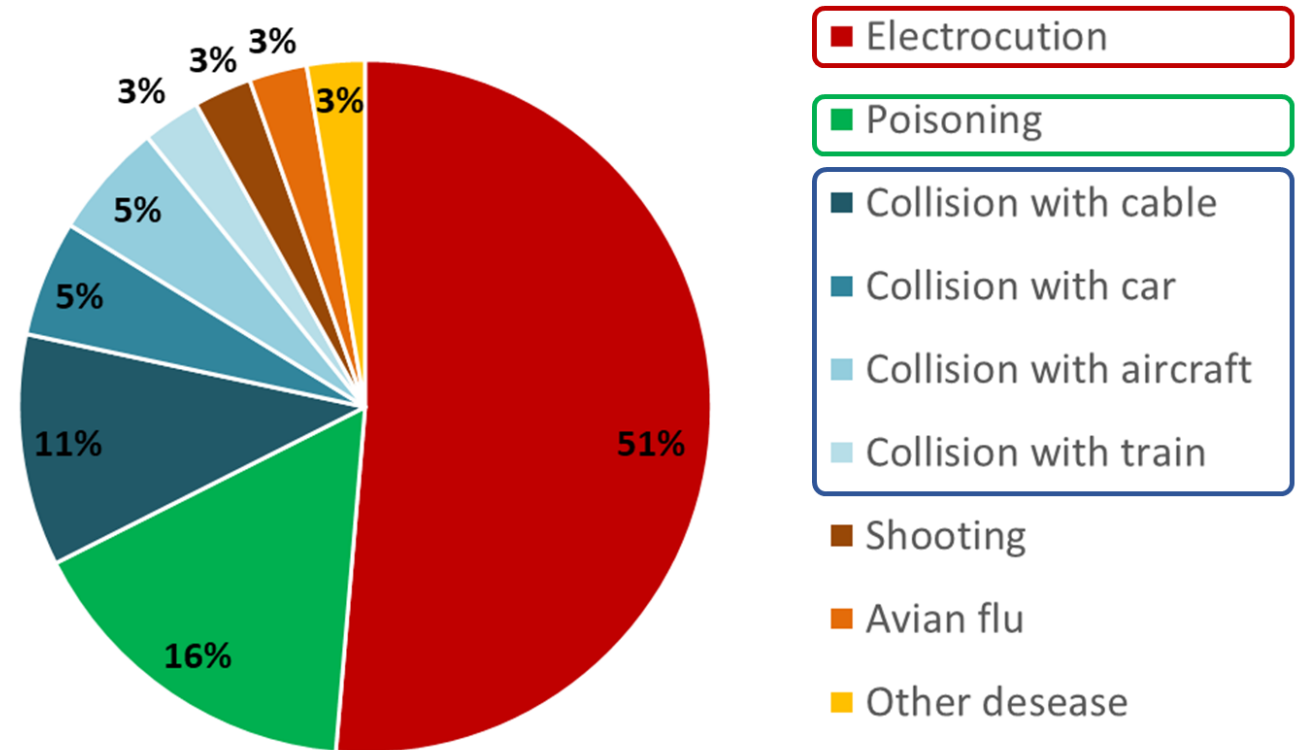




Photo by DINPI & János Bagyura

Photos by János Bagyura & György Bíró, KNPI, DINPI

Cooperation with the energy sector

- ▶ Electrocution is by far the largest threat
- ▶ ~85% of the population nests on power pylons (remaining 15 % on trees, 0 nesting on rocks)
- ▶ **Cooperation with MAVIR (Hungarian Independent Transmission System Company) and other suppliers is essential**



Photo by János Bagyura & György Bíró

Formal cooperation framework: Accessible Sky Agreement (2008)

- Ministry responsible for nature conservation
- Energy companies
- Authorities
- National Park Directorates
- BirdLife Hungary



Photo by János Bagyura

Mitigation of infrastructure risks: Retrofitting utility pylons

Cross-arm insulator



ENSTO cover



Photo by János Bagyura

suspended insulated structure

On-the-ground conservation actions: nest guarding



Photo by János Bagyura & Tamás Szitta



Monitoring and research: GPS tagging

- ▶ Migration
- ▶ Dispersal
- ▶ Mortality causes



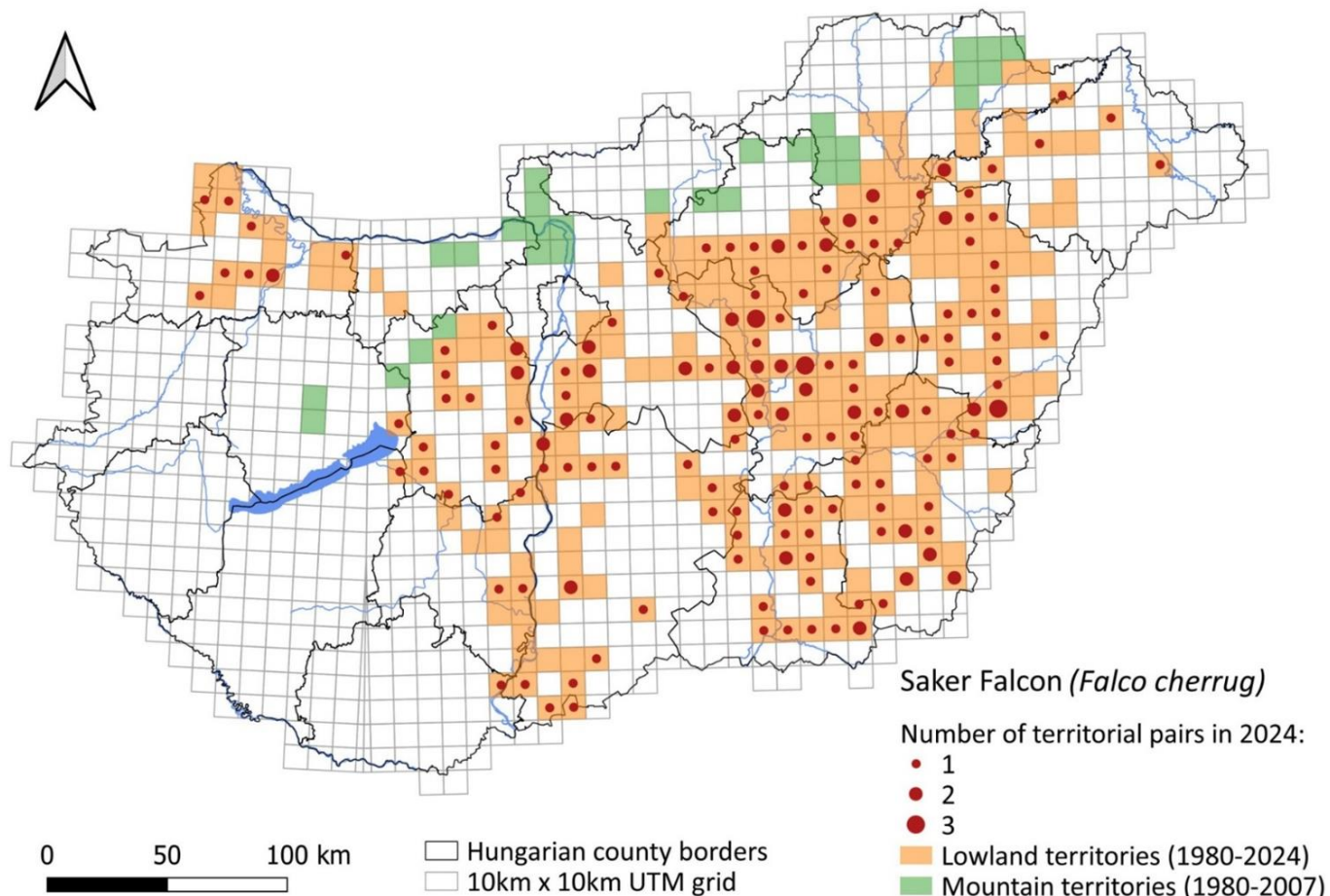
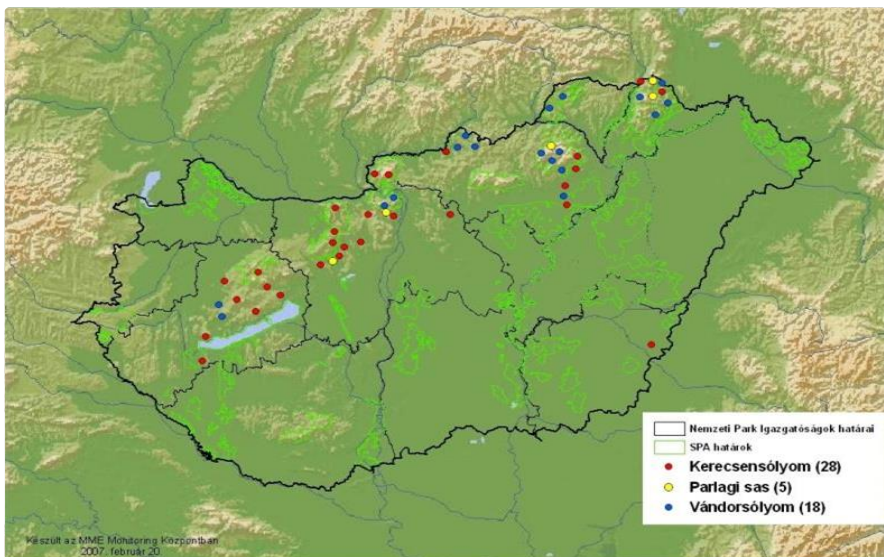


Rescue and
rehabilitation: healing
and reintroduction of
injured birds



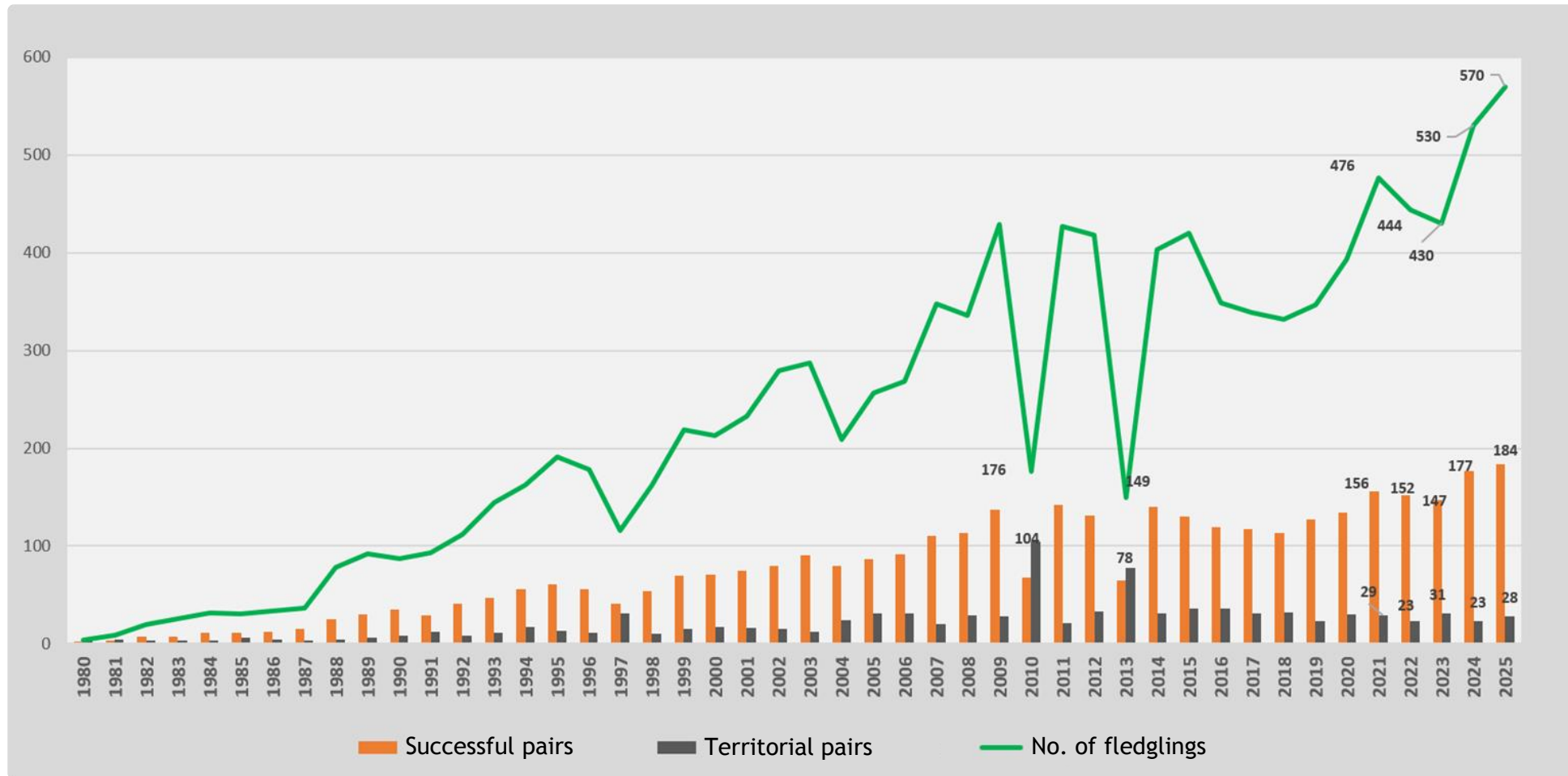
Distribution of the Saker Falcon in Hungary, based on the number of breeding pairs (2025)

Distribution in 1949-1950



Source: BirdLife Hungary

Population size and trend of the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Hungary, based on the number of breeding pairs (1980-2025)



Current estimated population size: **212-235 pairs**

Source: BirdLife Hungary

Exceptionally cold weather in 2010, 2013



Future priorities and key tasks

Monitoring

- ▶ Continue long-term monitoring of the breeding population

Habitat and ecology

- ▶ Study land use, habitat selection, and diet
- ▶ Continue implementation and maintenance of nestboxes

Threat assessment

- ▶ Analyze contaminants in eggs
- ▶ Study impacts of other raptor species (imperial eagle, WTE, raven; peregrine spreading to flat habitats and occupying saker nestboxes)

Law enforcement by cooperation with police

Infrastructure research

- ▶ Evaluate potential EMF effects of HVPLs

Data and research

- ▶ Apply modern geoinformatics and statistical analysis

Projects

- ▶ Successful implementation of SakerRoads LIFE project (2023-2028)

Acknowledgements



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