

COMMENTARY

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ON RAPTOR ROADSIDE SURVEYS IN WESTERN TURKEY AND EASTERN GREECE

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In a recent publication by Eakle (1994), the results of a roadside survey in western Turkey and eastern Greece are detailed. From our point of view the results obtained are scarcely reliable for two reasons: (1) The surveys are very heterogeneous and hardly repeatable. Transects by such different means of transportation as car, train, bus, or on foot are included, with the distances travelled on each of them unspecified (in nine surveys only bus/foot or car/foot are detailed). Obviously, the speed in these cases was not checked by the observer (except when he moved on foot). (2) A possible confusion could occur in the determination of the smaller falcons (genus *Falco*) to the species level. Eurasian kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) and lesser kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) amounted to 71.3% of the raptor sightings. We have been intensively working with lesser kestrels for the last 7 yr, including plumage characteristics (see i.e., Negro 1991). We can assert that telling these kestrel species apart in flight is highly problematic even for an expert birdwatcher moving on foot and using binoculars. It is only possible to separate the males of the two species under good light conditions and at close range, and after careful observation (see also Cramp and Simmons 1980). The best way of distinguishing between the species is by their vocalizations. The conditions necessary to distinguish the two kestrel species do not usually occur when observing from a car, and seem impossible when travelling by train or bus. To distinguish flying females is virtually impossible (Porter et al. 1974). In other studies carried out by expert birdwatchers in Mediterranean areas where both species are abundant, the number of undeter-

mined kestrels tends to be high (Meyburg 1973). It is amazing that all of the 132 kestrels observed by Eakle could be identified to the species level. Perhaps the author has assumed that birds in flocks were lesser kestrels and solitary birds were Eurasian kestrels. This would be erroneous. Lesser kestrels are often solitary hunters (authors unpubl. data). Eurasian kestrels are sometimes colonial breeders in Mediterranean farmlands (Porter et al. 1974, Bustamante 1994), and rather often hunt insects in flight, forming monospecific or mixed flocks with lesser kestrels (Negro 1991, authors unpubl. data).

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