

Book reviews

Publishers and Authors are invited to submit a copy of their books for a review in the journal. Books are to be sent to the Deputy Editor-in-chief of Avocetta (Dr. Michelangelo Morganti - CNR-IRSA Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Istituto di ricerca sulle acque - Via del Mulino 19, 20861 Brugherio - MB)

Updated insights into the fate of an iconic raptor: the new collegial book on the Peregrine Falcon in Italy.

What's going on with the Peregrine Falcon in Italy? This book is devoted to finding a comprehensive answer to this simple question. However, as for any simple question, a complex answer is required and this takes almost 190 pages to resolve. The book opens with a nice introductory section, which includes a review on the systematic of the species (written by the renowned expert, Maurizio Sarà) and an insight into the urbanization process of the Peregrine Falcon in the last decades written by the ecologist Giacomo Dell'Omo, who has been studying peregrines in Rome for many years. The introduction (50 pages in total) is closed by Editors of the volume, Massimo Brunelli and Marco Gustin, with a review chapter summarizing at the national level the regional statuses of the species, which are presented in the main section of the book, organized in 21 chapters (one for each Italian region). Both the introductory and the regional chapters represent self-standing sound scientific contributions, compiled with a common effort by both academic researchers and field ornithologists with wide and robust experience on this species. Overall, this work represents a collegial effort that the Editors, together with LIPU/Birdlife Italy and Edizioni Belvedere, were able to manage and publish in a nice pocket format, enriched by a nice color portfolio with images of the species and its main breeding habitats in the country. The price (28€) is completely justified by both the

quality of the contributions and of the printing. The book is written in Italian, which may limit its diffusion abroad, but makes it accessible to the non-academic Italian public. Each chapter is anyway preceded by an English abstract. Among the many interesting data that enrich this book, it is described how the Italian population of Peregrine Falcon boosted in all the Italian regions in the last 30 years, from less than 500 to almost 1,800 pairs. This increase was diffuse but occurred at unequal rates among regions, and the different threads that the Peregrine still faces over the country are diffusely presented. Overall, a piece of science that contributes to fostering our knowledge of the changing world and gives insights into the future directions of raptor research and conservation.

Michelangelo Morganti

michelangelo.morganti@avocetta.org

 0000-0002-8047-0429

Reference

Brunelli M. & Gustin M., 2022. Il falco pellegrino in Italia. Status, biologia e conservazione di una specie di successo. Edizioni Belvedere, Latina, 'le scienze' (35). 190 p. 28.00€

Dancing in the dark: a journey into the life of Owls of Italy and Europe

Deep dark eyes gazing at the night sky, silence all around: owls are undoubtedly among the most enigmatic birds on the planet. In the book “Rapaci d’Italia e d’Europa – 2. Notturni”, the authors embark on the strenuous task of encompassing the history, morphology, and ecology of all owl species of Italy and Europe. Just by looking at the index one realises that this is not just a compilation of species descriptions, but rather a journey across the world of owls. In chapter one, which focuses on the evolution of owls, we’re taken back of ca. 65 million years, to when the oldest owl fossil remains are dated. We jump through prehistoric eras characterised by now-extinct crazy-looking owls, including the 10 kg Cuban giant owl *Ornimegalonyx oteroi*, running around (not flying!) just 10’000 years ago. We are then brought back to the present and we dive into the anatomy of some of the most characterising aspects of owls: their silent flight, powerful eyesight, and sharpest hearing. The authors tackle difficult concepts in great depth but with clarity, with the help of the fine illustrations of Andrea Ambrogio. Chapter two encompasses the main facets of owls’ ecology: their preferred habitats, hunting strategies, diet, breeding and roosting behaviour. In chapter three, the most important field techniques to study owls are presented, from population census to diet analysis and bioacoustics. In this chapter, the authors even report, for several owl species, all the multi-year studies carried out in Italy. We eventually get to the descriptions of the 14 owl species, a chapter way less voluminous than the one in the previous volume dedicated to diurnal raptors. Each species is introduced by an anecdote of one of the authors or contributors narrating a moment when they observed or heard an individual of that species. And each time you get catapulted with them, on the top of a cliff waiting to hear an Eagle Owl or deep in a forest hoping for the Ural Owl to give a sign of its presence. A great addition to this volume compared to the previous one is the

European distribution maps from the European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (see Catitti 2020 in Avocetta 44: 120-121), which complement the presentation of each species and broaden the pool of potential readers, despite the book being written in Italian. The last two chapters delve into the relationship between men and owls across time and different cultures. Through time, owls were addressed as divine (like the Little Owl *Athene noctua*, dearest to the Greek goddess Athena, as the name suggests), then later malicious, bearers of misfortunes. Truth is, owls are enigmatic birds which we struggle to comprehend. This book is a guide towards a better understanding of owls, an inspiring, well-written journey in their secret life.

Benedetta Catitti

benedetta.catitti@avocetta.org



0000-0003-4018-7300

Reference

Cauli F., Galeotti P. & Genero F., 2022. Rapaci d’Italia e d’Europa – 2. Notturni. Edizioni Belvedere, Latina.

The next generation atlas: the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas

In the last years, the book review section of *Avocetta* has presented several atlases, the last of which was the European Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (see Catitti 2020 in *Avocetta* 44: 120-121). Now, for the first time, we present what is not a 'traditional' book, but an interactive website that stands as a new reference for modern migration atlases.

The **Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas** is freely available at www.migrationatlas.org and is composed by a mapping tool that summarizes and shows ring recoveries of 300 species stored in the EURING data bank (www.euring.org) and spanning over one century. This mapping tool is interactive, as it allows selecting among eight European regions defined *a priori* as areas of origin of birds, as well as by month, to show movement patterns in space and time. Other maps show age and sex differences, and patterns according to recovery conditions.

This atlas also integrates information from ring recoveries with those from tracking devices for some 100 species, as available in Movebank (www.movebank.org) and provided by the single scientists and research groups in charge of the different projects. Even if tracking data are often only available for a small number of individuals or populations, they provide important complementary information to ringing data as they often show movements from areas with limited ring-recovery effort.

Differently from previous atlases that rapidly become outdated, the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas has the potential to be regularly updated as new information become available in the EURING databank or in Movebank.

The maps are accompanied by interpretive texts written by migration ecology experts. Importantly, it includes an Executive Summary, highlighting the conservation implications of the project, and four research modules that focus on historical changes in migration patterns, intentional killing of birds by man, migration seasons of hunted species, and migratory

connectivity within the Eurasian-African migration system.

The Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas has been launched on May 26th in an event that, remarkably, was held in Ventotene (Italy), a small island in the Tyrrhenian Sea where the seminal idea of a European Union was first conceived by the anti-fascism exiles Spinelli, Rossi and Colorni in 1944, and that hosts a famous ringing station since few decades. The location of the launch event highlights also the important role of Italy in this work. Indeed, the project was fully funded in 2017 by the Italian Ministry of the Environment and coordinated by the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), which has a future vision of a Global Atlas of Animal Migration to inform the conservation of a wide range of migratory animals.

This work not only stands as a milestone for migration atlases, being a new reference for future works, but will also be a significant source of information for ornithologists and policy makers at a continental and flyway scale, which is the only biologically meaningful perspective for conservation strategies and management policies for migratory birds.

Enjoy and play with the atlas!

Roberto Ambrosini

roberto.ambrosini@avocetta.org

 0000-0002-7148-146

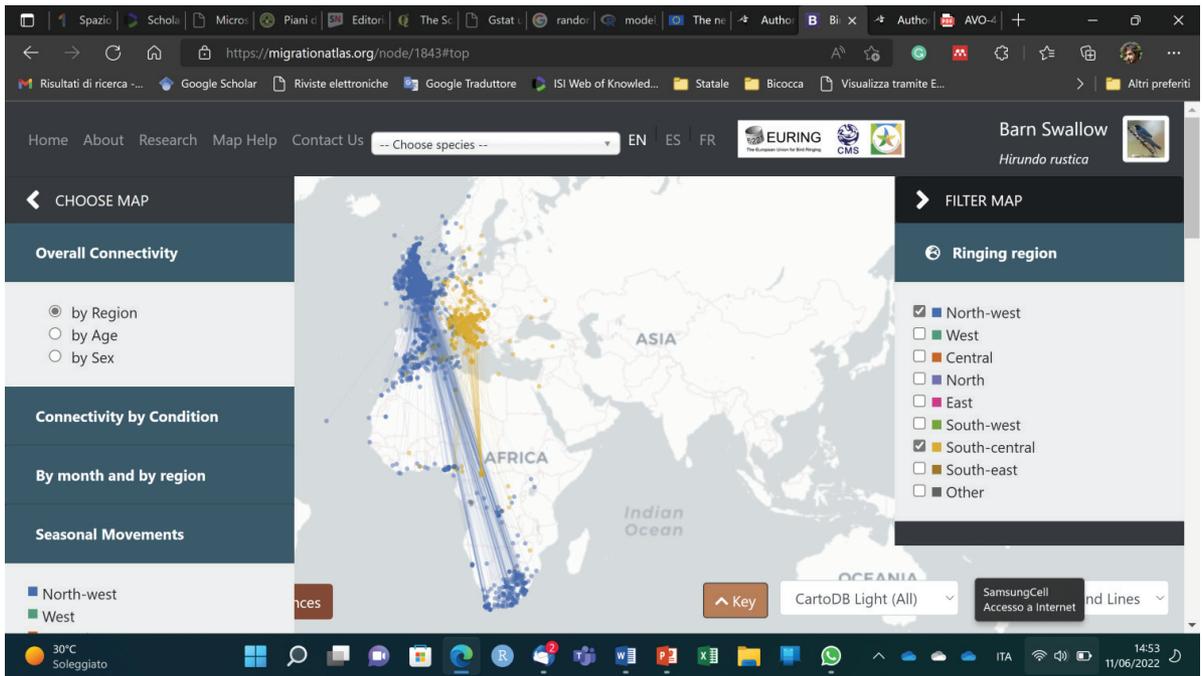
Fernando Spina

fernando.spina@isprambiente.it

Reference

Spina F., Baillie S.R., Bairlein F, Fiedler W. & Thorup K. (Eds) 2022. The Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas. <https://migrationatlas.org>. EURING/CMS.

Book reviews



A screenshot of the mapping tool of the Eurasian African Bird Migration Atlas showing the Ring recoveries of Barn Swallows ringed in two different European regions (North-west in blue and South-Central in yellow).