



Gibraltar

Tracking short-toed eagles

The short-toed eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*, is mainly a summer visitor to southern Europe. Up to about 700 have been recorded migrating over the Rock of Gibraltar in one season. Increasingly, they are seen in the area during winter. Therefore there is an indication of the beginning of a shift in migratory behavior. Several short-toed eagles are downed every year by yellow-legged gulls, *Larus cachinnans*, and peregrine falcons, *Falco peregrinus*, and are re-



John Cortes, bottom, rings a short-toed eagle with the assistance of Vincent Robba and Stanley Olivero

habilitated and released.

The satellite tracking investigations were started with various aims in mind. The first aim is to look at the migratory habits of the birds—in particular to identify their wintering areas and the routes followed to and from these. The birds targeted are those hatched in the previous year and released in late spring, giving an opportunity to locate them during two successive nesting seasons. A secondary aim is to ascertain survival after the rehabilitation process.

The project is in its infancy, with only two eagles, a male and a female, having been equipped so far. They have, however, already shown that they both survived for months after release. Winter locations were found for one of the eagles in Morocco, further north than the main wintering grounds. This eagle, which continued to transmit for over a year, returned in the second spring to a location similar to the first.

John Cortes, Gibraltar Natural History Field Centre



Short-toed eagle flying away over a Gibraltar town

Photos courtesy of E.Yome/
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Portugal

Movements of the little bustard in the Iberian Peninsula

The little bustard, *Tetrax tetrax*, is a medium-sized grassland bird that has suffered a major decline in most of its Palearctic range, mainly due to agricultural intensification. It is considered a globally Near Threatened species and is a priority species under the European Bird Directive. Portugal and Spain harbor more than half of the world's population of the species.

In contrast with the northern and eastern breeding populations of the little bustard, which are fully migratory, the Iberian populations are thought to be sedentary or, at most, partially migratory, but still little is known.



João Paulo Silva

Since 2000, a study of the little bustard's movements has been carried out by the Portuguese Nature Institute (ICN) with three main objectives: (i) to identify the areas that it depends upon through the year; (ii) to contribute to the understanding of its biological requirements and (iii) to test the fidelity to the selected areas.

Since the little bustard is mostly dependent upon open agricultural ecosystems, its survival is highly dependent on how these are managed within its range. Knowledge of the factors that determine how the species uses these ecosystems throughout its yearly cycle is essential to plan sound management practices.

João Paulo Silva, Instituto da Conservação da Natureza



Male little bustard

Photos courtesy of Carlos Carrapato and Paula Pereira respectively

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