

# THE LESSER KESTREL IN ELECTRICAL SUBSTATIONS

Collaborative Agreement between  
Doñana Biological Station (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas)  
and Red Eléctrica de España



RED ELÉCTRICA DE ESPAÑA



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Within the framework of the collaborative project undertaken with institutions and administrations for the development of research projects aimed at protecting birdlife, Red Eléctrica de España has collaborated with Doñana Biological Station (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas) in a research study on the relations between the lesser kestrel and electrical substations.

Both entities have participated in this study ever since an important population of kestrels was detected in some electrical substations in Aragón and Navarra.

In view of such a large concentration of birds belonging to a protected species, the study required, firstly, exhaustive research and specific follow-up by an institution of great prestige and secondly, an important involvement with respect to assuming a commitment to preserve the species.



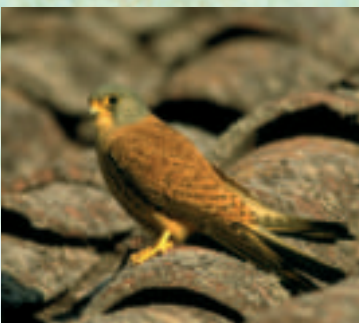
## The lesser kestrel

The lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) is a bird of prey measuring some 30 cm in length. Both males and females are easy to distinguish: the top part of the male is reddish in colour and its head, tail and part of its wing are grey. The lower part is speckled and darkish-white; the females and chicks are brown with black spots and stripes on their top part and speckled white on the lower part.

They live in open spaces and feed off insects such as grasshoppers and some small vertebrates such as mice. They can be seen in the spring and summer, but they mostly migrate to Africa in the winter.

They nest in holes in walls and roofs in the country, in villages or cities and generally form groups and colonies.

The population of this species has dwindled all over the world and it is therefore a protected species.





## Resting places

During the summer, the lesser kestrel remains in Spain, forming large colonies. It hunts during the day in preparation for migration and gather together at night in resting places, both in trees or in electrical facilities.



The largest resting places in the Ebro valley are located in electrical substations. The skilful way in which the kestrels fly allows them to find shelter in these facilities. These resting places are important in preserving the species, due to the large number of kestrels and their different places of origin.

## Distribution of the lesser kestrel in Spain



## Results of the research project

- The lesser kestrel uses electrical substations as resting places during their pre-migration period, which is from the end of June to the beginning of October.
- This is not an occasional use, but the resting places in the substations are reused during successive years. In addition, these birds prefer this type of place to others such as electrical lines or trees.
- The presence of the lesser kestrel in the electrical substations poses no risk to the species and does not interrupt the normal operation of these facilities.

Based on the results obtained, Red Eléctrica assumes a commitment to protect the species, by adapting all the maintenance work carried out on substations to periods during which they are not occupied by these birds.