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NEWSLETTER

September/October 2023

LIFE EUROKITE

(LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048)





"The conservation of umbrella species, such as large birds of prey, is essential for the protection of European biodiversity. Collecting data on the red kite's movements and mortality factors will contribute towards this goal, thanks to the EU-supported LIFE EUROKITE project."

Pascal Durand

**Since 2014 Member of the European Parliament
(MEP) – France**

**Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and
Democrats**



LIFE EUROKITE Midterm Conference

On 05.10.2023, the LIFE EUROKITE midterm conference took place in Halberstadt (Germany). Together with project partners and cooperation partners of the project, this day was used to exchange ideas and listen to interesting presentations during the conference. We would like to thank all those who were present on site and online.

The recordings of the conference and presentations can be accessed at the following link.

<https://www.life-eurokite.eu/en/news/news-detail/life-eurokite-midterm-conference-2.html>



Partner of the LIFE EUROKITE project.

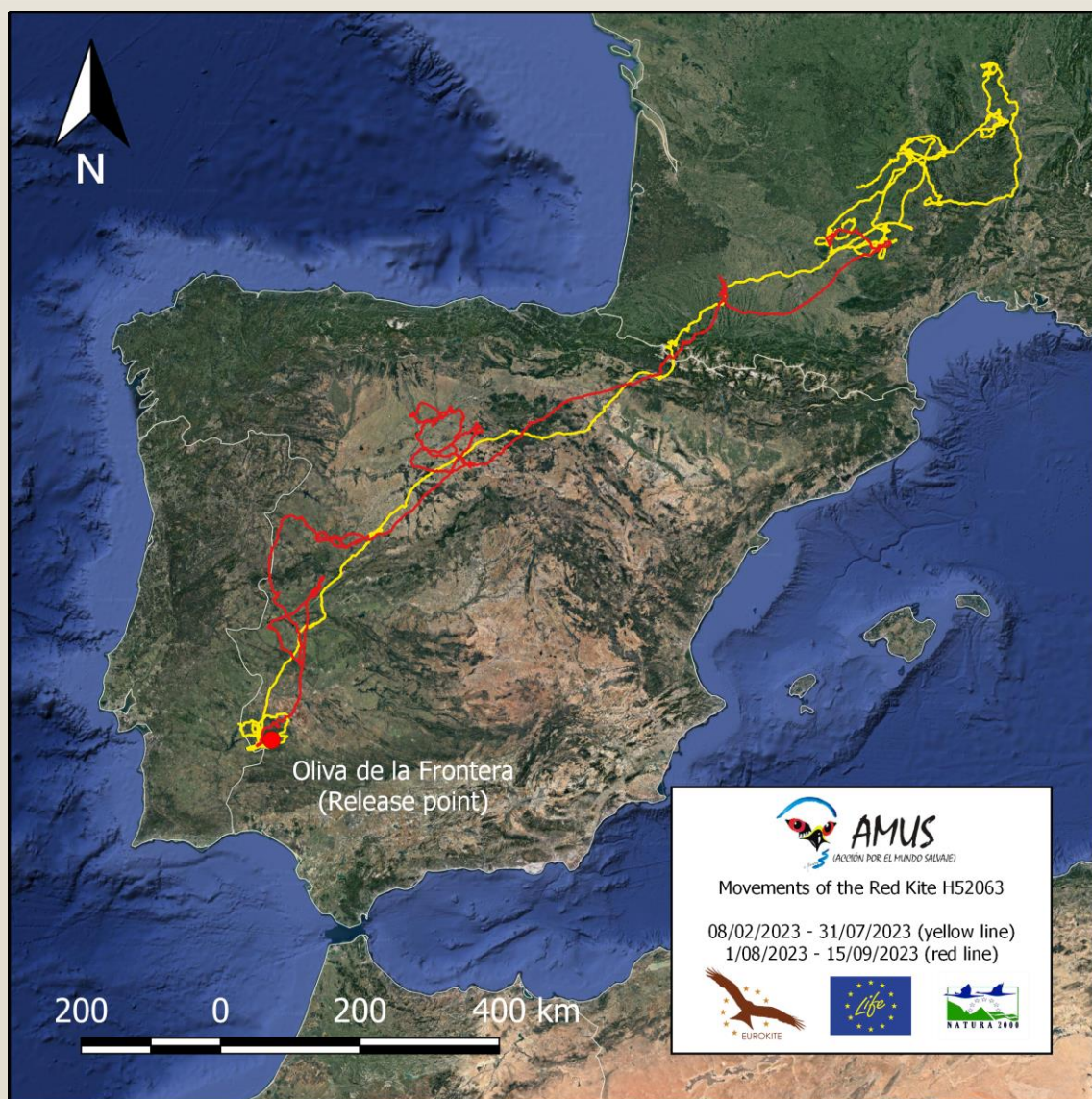


Partner and cooperation partners of the LIFE EUROKITE project.

Red kite´s wintering is coming

With the beginning of autumn, the migration of many bird species starts. For the red kite, which is native to Spain but has a significant wintering population from Western Europe, the migration surprisingly started already a few weeks ago.

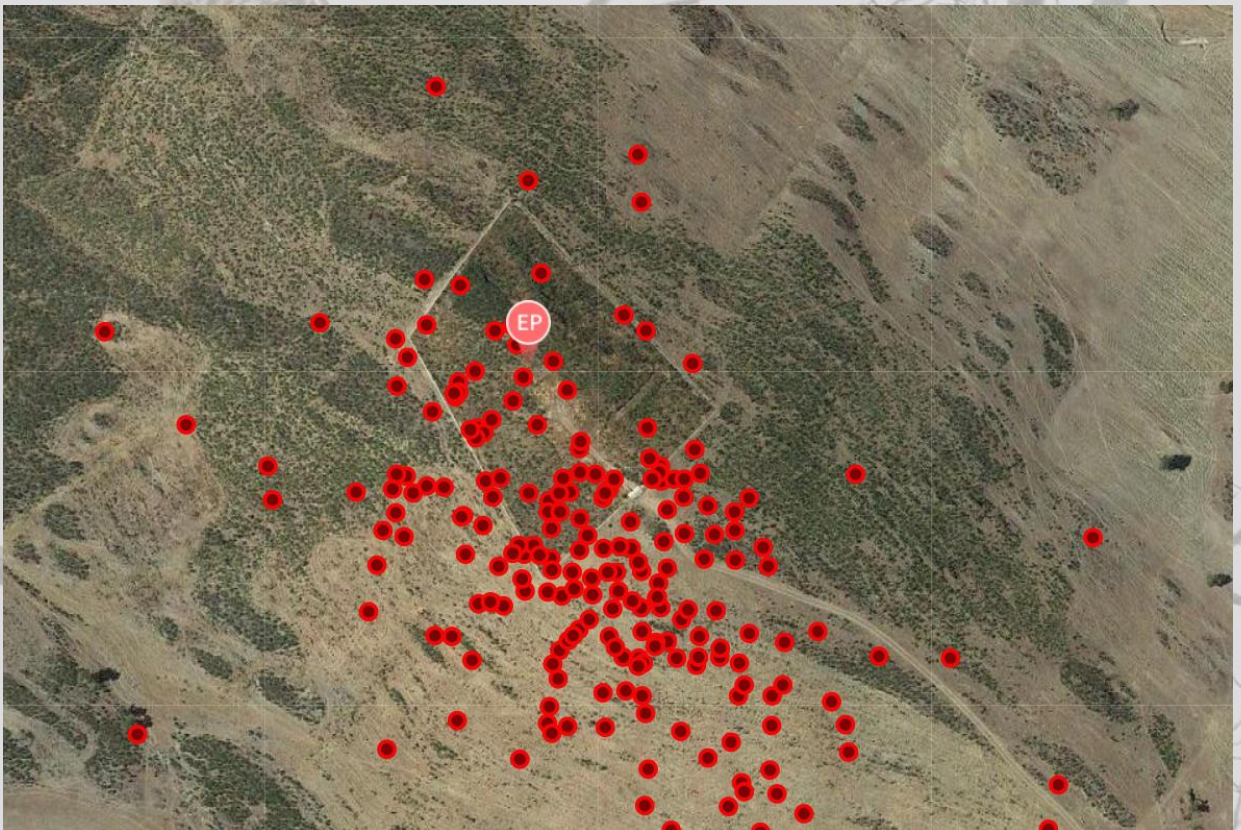
Normally October is the month when the first red kites can be seen in southern Spain, with the peak of wintering red kites in December/January, but thanks to the tagged birds as part of the LIFE EUROKITE project, we can always discover new surprises. One of the red kites (wintering guest), tagged by AMUS-Acción por el Mundo Salvaje, a LIFE EUROKITE partner, in south-western Extremadura (Spain) in February 2023, spent a short time in the area before returning to its potential birthplace in south-eastern France, where it spent the spring and summer.



Migration route of the tagged red kite.

However, this bird did not wait until autumn and surprisingly started migrating on 1 August, to the wintering area, where it arrived on 15 September in the southwest of the Extremadura region near the Portuguese border. The fidelity to the wintering grounds is so strong that this red kite arrived directly at the Vulture Feeding Station, where it had been previously tagged.

Moreover, thanks to the video cameras installed in the southwest of the Extremadura region, some wintering birds have already been recorded in the last days of September (without GPS or markers). Soon, thousands of red kites will fly from the different breeding areas in Europe to Spain, among other places, to spend the winter there.



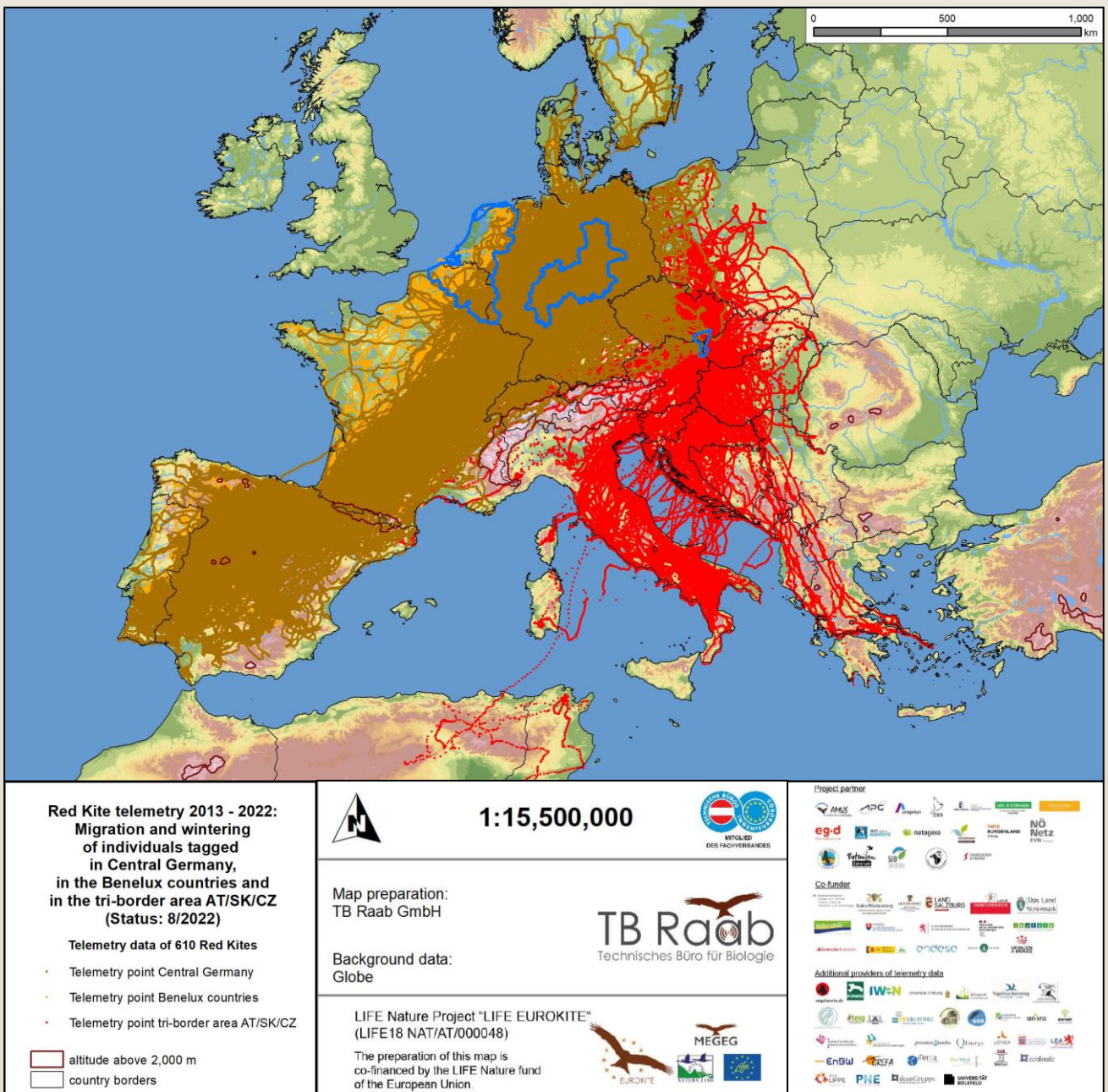
Tagging place and GPS points of the red kite on the day of arrival in the area of the feeding station.

Migration and flight movements

The migration towards the winter quarters takes place mainly in September and October. Spain and southern France are the most important wintering areas for the red kite population.

Young birds born in Central Europe the previous year remain in their winter quarters much longer than adult birds (until February), mostly until March or April. Only a few one-year-old young birds (= 2nd calendar year) also spend the summer in the wintering area.

Red kites show great variability in migration strategies. Most individuals in northeast Europe are migratory, but there is also a growing number of sedentary individuals.



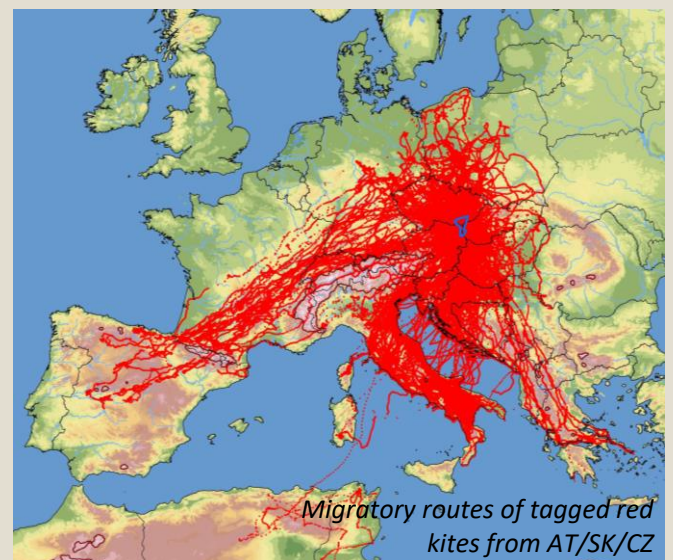
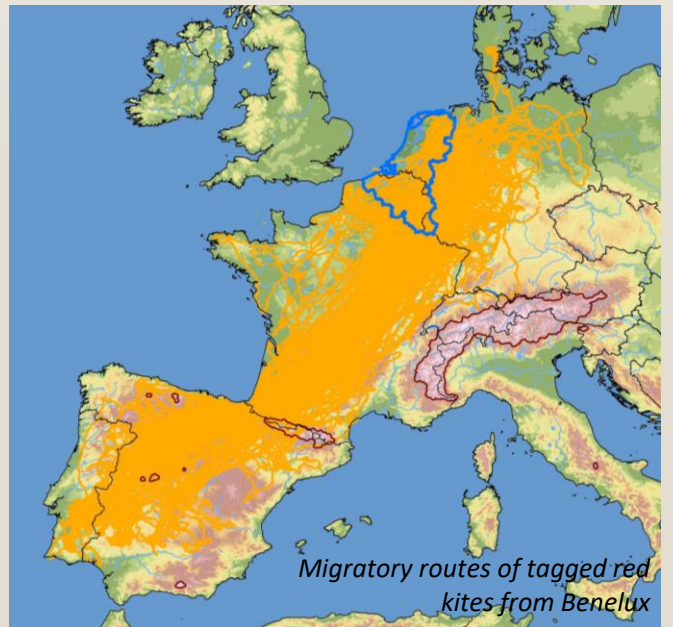
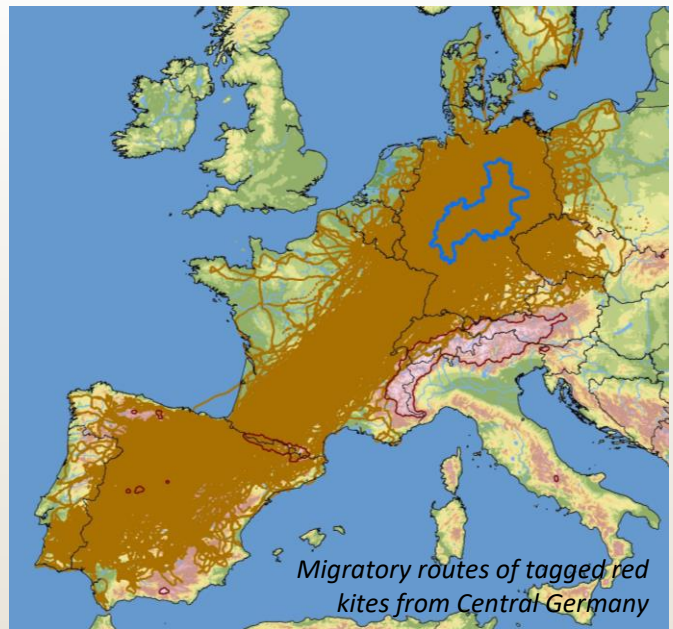
Comparison of the migratory routes of tagged red kites from different regions in Europe. Brown: Central Germany, Yellow: Benelux, Red: Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic.

Differences between juveniles and adults were observed during spring migration. Adult red kites began spring migration to the northeast in February-March, while immature individuals began much later and had a longer time span (February-June). Adult individuals also took significantly fewer days to reach their destination (12 ± 5 days) and covered more distance per day (134.2 ± 37.1 km/day) than juveniles (19 ± 11 days and 98.9 ± 21.2 km/day). The spring migration was significantly faster and with fewer stopover days than the autumn migration (Garcia-Macía et al. 2021).

The migratory behaviour can vary greatly in different red kite individuals. Young birds from the same nest can choose different wintering grounds (Literák et al. 2019). GPS data also revealed that Italy and the Balkans are important wintering areas for red kites from Central Europe. Several sea crossings by red kites could be evaluated using the GPS data (Raab et al. 2017).

Garcia-Macía, J., Vidal-Mateo, J., De La Puente, J., Bermejo A., Raab, R., Urios, V. (2021). Seasonal differences in migration strategies of Red Kite s (*Milvus milvus*) wintering in Spain. *Journal of Ornithology*, Springer 2021.

Raab, R., Literák, I., Schütz, C., Spakovszky, P., Steindl, J., Schönemann, N., Tarjányi, S.G., Peske, L., Makon, K., Mráz, J., Maderic, B., Pecenak, V., Matusik, H. & Schulze, C.H. (2017). GPS-basierte Telemetriestudien an mitteleuropäischen Rotmilanen *Milvus milvus* – methodische Schwierigkeiten und analytische Möglichkeiten basierend auf ersten Ergebnissen. *Ornithologische Mitteilungen* 69(7/8):245-260.



**Red Kite telemetry 2013 - 2022:
Roosting sites in January
(Status: 12/2022)**

Roosting sites of 1,172 tagged Red Kites

● Roosting site in January

altitude above 2,000 m
country borders



Map preparation:
TB Raab GmbH



Background data:
Globe

LIFE Nature Project "LIFE EUROKITE"
(LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048)

The preparation of this map is
co-financed by the LIFE Nature fund
of the European Union.



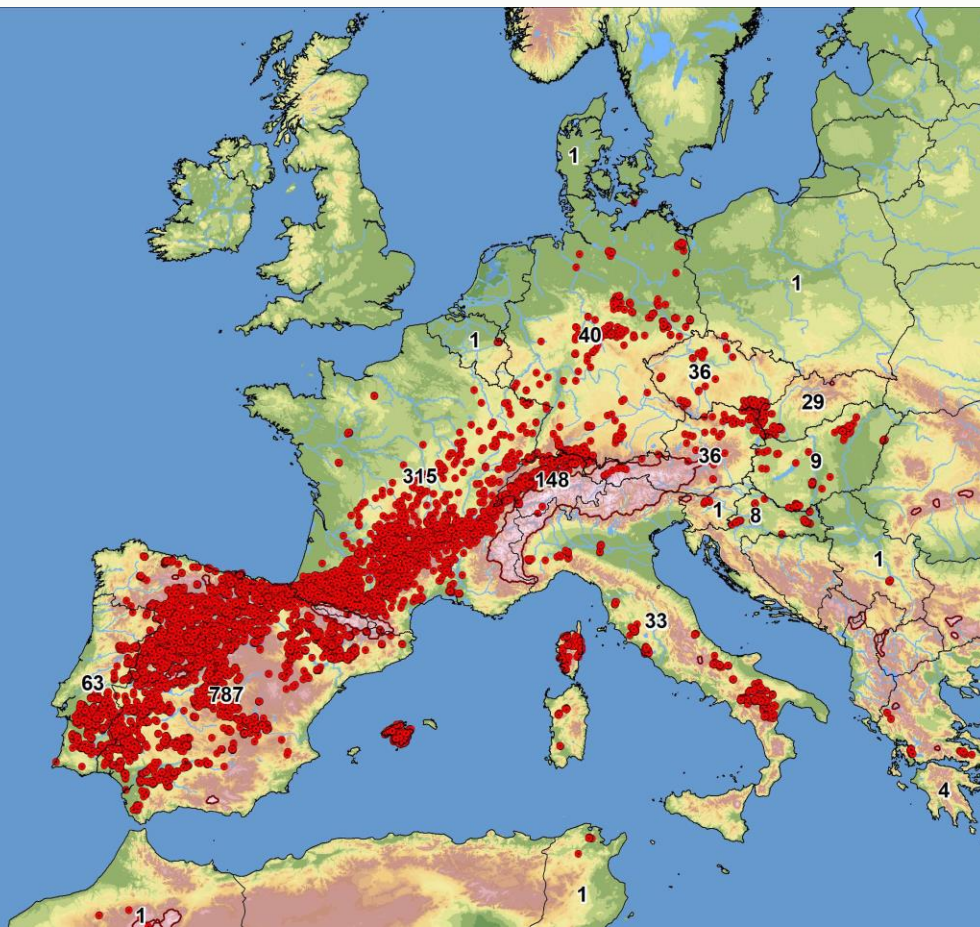
Project partner



Co-funder



Cooperation partners who provide telemetry data



Top: Overnight roosting points of 1,172 tagged red kites in January from 2013 to 2022 across Europe and the number of individuals per country. Bottom: Overnight roosting points of 1,877 tagged red kites in July in the period 2013 to 2022 across Europe and the number of individuals per country.

**Red Kite telemetry 2013 - 2022:
Roosting sites in July
(Status: 12/2022)**

Roosting sites of 1,877 tagged Red Kites

● Roosting site in July

altitude above 2,000 m
country borders



Map preparation:
TB Raab GmbH



Background data:
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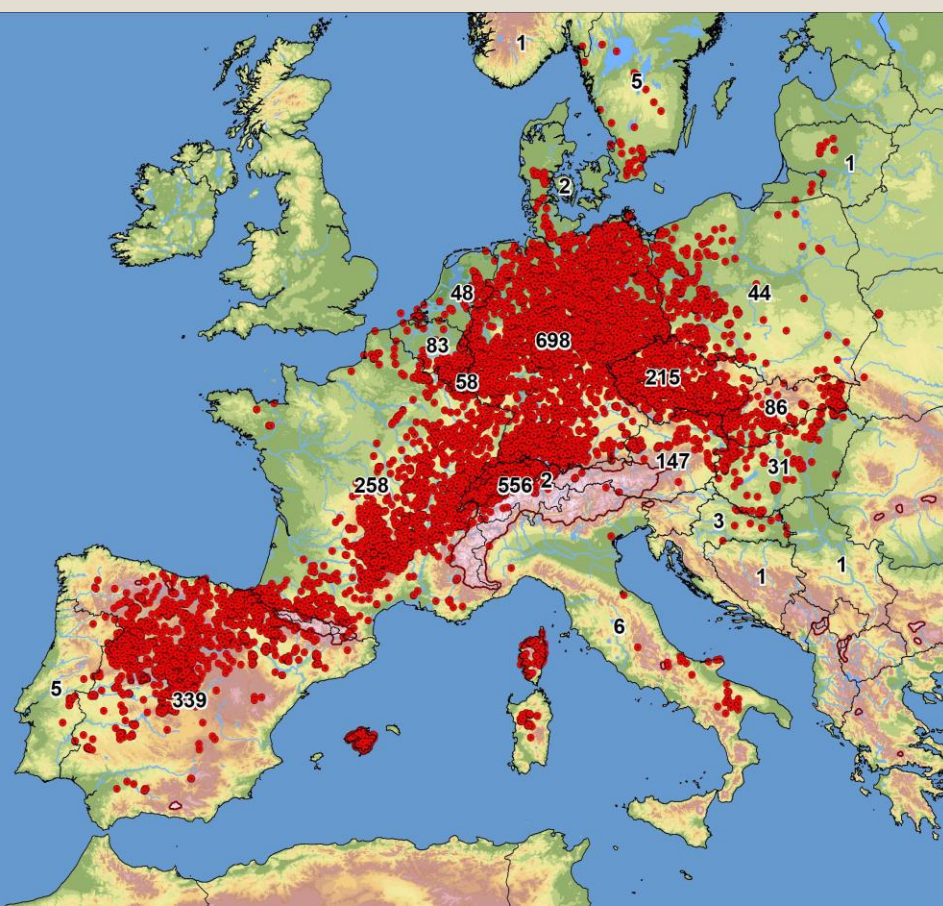
Project partner



Co-funder



Cooperation partners who provide telemetry data



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Coordinating Beneficiary



The TB Raab was commissioned to implement the LIFE EUROKITE project after a pan-European public tender.



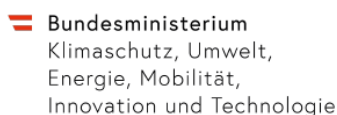
Project partner (Associated Beneficiary)



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Consejería de Agricultura, Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Rural
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Co-financier



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Cooperation partner



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Universidad de Oviedo



Hessisches Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Energie, Verkehr und Wohnen



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