

Project for restoration of the nesting places of the Saker Falcon in the Tuva Republic

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2004

The Republic of Tuva is located in the geographical
centre of Asia.

Geographical coordinates:
Latitude 50,30 Longitude 94,65



The nature of Tuva is very variable. It has the mountain tundra, taiga, forest-steppe and steppe habitats. Steppe depressions in-between the mountains. Most of the breeding sites of raptors are located in the steppe.



However, before colonizing the steppe by human raptors breed only on cliffs.



In the Tuva Republic since the end of 1980 s (XX century) the main provider of nests for the Sakers (Falco cherrug) the Upland Buzzard (Buteo hemilasius) has started to use electric poles



The Saker Falcon in turn started to inhabit electric poles in flat steppe too, has built taking over the Upland Buzzard nests.



Since 90 s the number of electric poles in the Tuva Republic has rapidly decreased in the very quickly.
Only occasional poles remained by 2000.



Practice all the remaining electric poles were occupied by the birds of prey. The factor of electrocution has disappeared, however a new negative factor has emerged: the poles started to be cut down for firewood.





All 26 nesting places of birds of prey located on electric poles disappeared by the year 2001

Herders started to cut down saw the remaining electric poles not only during winter but and summer during the breeding period for raptors in 2001 year.



These Saker's chickens have survived by chance when the electric pole was destroyed.



By the year 2002 the electric power lines suitable for raptors breeding ceased to exist.



The electric poles disappeared in the flat steppe and the Upland Buzzard nested on the poles tried to nest on a ground.



Some birds found used car tyres or small hillocks for nesting.

After the Upland Buzzard the other species of birds, such as the Raven (*Corvus corax*), the Saker, tried nest on the ground.



In the most cases predators have destroyed the nests with clutches or nestlings and killed adult birds.



The pilot project has been initiated to erect artificial nests on geodetic triangles in order to increase breeding success of the Upland Buzzard and the Saker Falcon.

As a result the Sakers has occupied several artificial nests.



After the successful pilot project the next practical project of erecting the artificial nests by new design (as a triangle) on a flat steppe has been carried out in Mongolia in April 2002 by ornithologists from Mongolian State University within the programs of ERWDA (UAE) and FRI (IWC, Ltd, UK) (project leader E.Potapov) with participation of the author.



The first 7 pairs of the Upland Buzzards had occupied the nests by 7-th day after setting up the platforms. The number of Upland Buzzards then increased to 25 pairs in 2003 and to 27 in 2004.

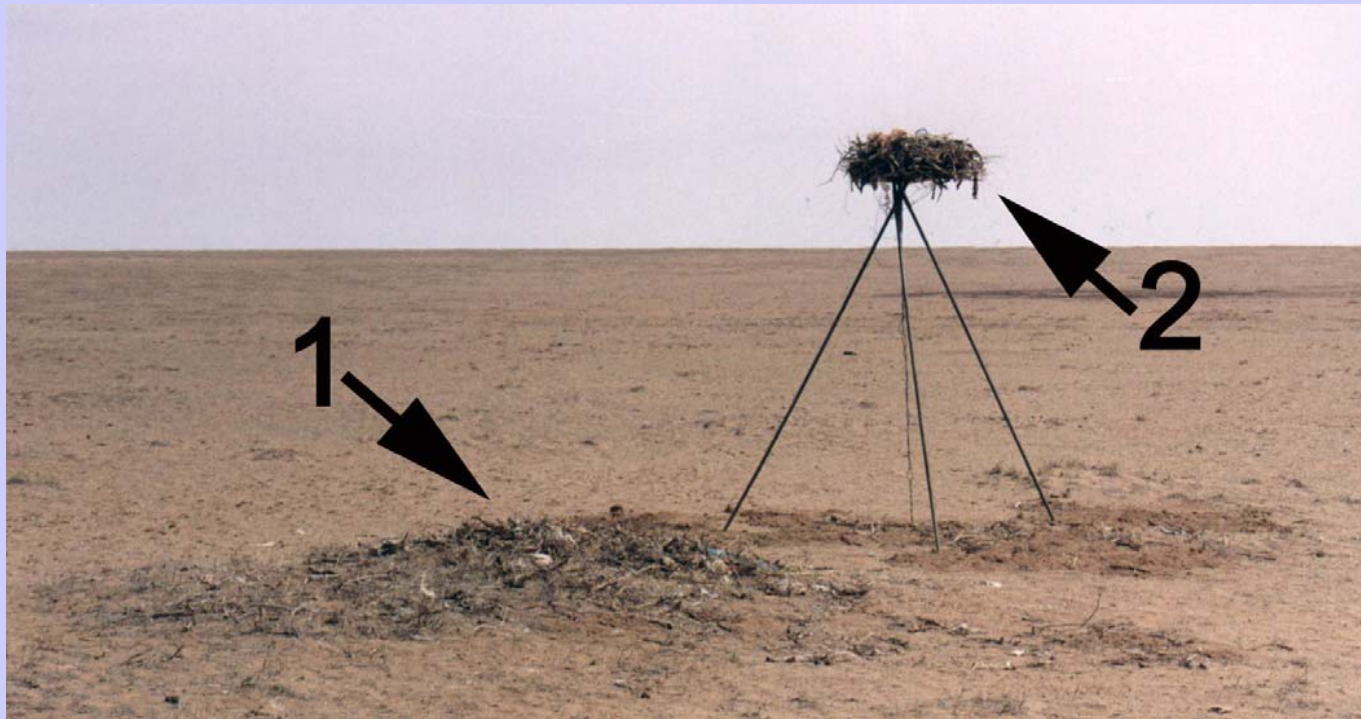


Several nests were occupied by the Saker Falcons which successful breeding 4 nests in 2003 and in 5 - in 2004.



For details of this project see the site:
<http://www.savethesaker.com>

Center for Field Studies managed to set up 7 artificial nests in 2002 and 10 – in 2003 in the south of Tuva of the design similar to the one used in Mongolian project.



The majority of artificial nests (2) were erected next to known ground nests (1) and had low or none the breeding success.

In 2003 the first 2 pairs of the Upland Buzzard and 3 pairs of the Saker have inhabited artificial nests.



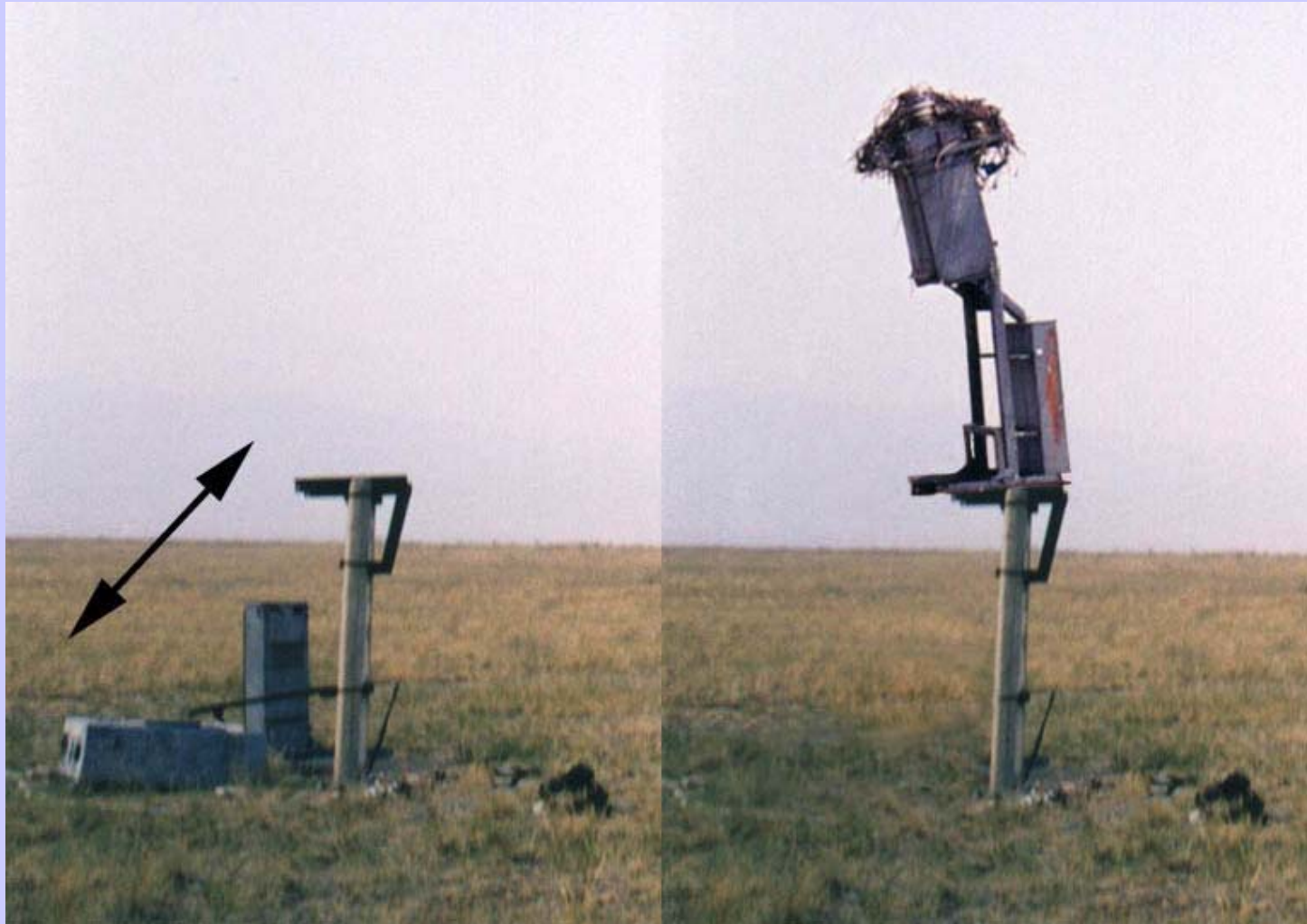
In the year 2004 the number of the Sakers breeding on the artificial nests have increased to 5 pairs.



During September-November 2004 47 artificial nests have been erected on the south a total of Tuva within the project «Saker farming in wild habitats», financed by the grant by the Oriental Bird Club (UK). 16 artificial nests have been erected on cut of tips of electric poles, where the Upland Buzzards and the Sakers were nesting.



11 artificial nests have erected on the topes of electric transformers which destroyed by herders during “The war against the electric poles”.



20 artificial nests were erected
on concrete poles of destroyed
electric transformers.



The conducted work and the success of preceding projects allows us to hope for successful recovery of the number of the breeding Saker Falcons in flat steppes on the Southern Tuva to the level of 1990 s.



Have taken part in the project:



Michail Kozhevnikov



El'vira Nikolenko



Sergey Bakka



Anna Shestakova

and

Maxim Grabovsky
Anastasia Rhybenko



Igor Karyakin

THE END

