

Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Underrated dangers for humans, nature and environment on the island of the Zeus!

Excessive use of pesticidal agents at Crete: Eleonora's falcon endangered!

(See also our leaflet No. 113-05/E of the Crete Environment Info)

Beside (illegal) the garbage depots (see info leaflet No. 113-05/E of the Crete Environmental Info.) the excessive use of pesticidal agents ¹⁾ on Crete is another, environmental relevant problem. For this the European Union introduced a violation of contract procedure against Greece in 2003, because it did not follow the request to submit information regarding offences against the environment law regulations of the European Union. In the concrete case it is about ascertained, alarming high number of deaths rates of the Eleonora's falcon on Crete, which is to due to an excessive use of pesticidal agents. The commission asked Greece for information about the special measures which correspond with the protection of this kind and the legislation of the European Union within the range of the nature protection. Those information was not submitted; with reasons provided answer is the last dunning letter of the European Union, before the commission occupies the European Court of Justice with the affair.



The Eleonora's falcon (*Falco eleonora*) reaches a body size of 36 - 42 cm and a wing-span of 85 - 105 cm. Its top side is grey colored, the lower surface is bright and possesses several longitudinal strips. About ¼ the falcons are somewhat darker than the remainder of the population. The breeding places of the Eleonora's falcon on Crete are to be found primarily in the rock columns of the coasts. The breeding time begins in August. Singing

birds and insects catch in midair rank to the food. How many of the about 3.000 still existing birds in the entire Mediterranean area do live on Crete, is currently not known - however they are to be seen rarer from year to year.



The illustrations show (from left to right): Map with the habitat emphasis/regions of the Eleonora's falcon on Crete, clutch of eggs and slipped young of *Falco eleonora*.

¹⁾ Pesticidal is the general name for plant protection and pesticides, which are divided into the following groups of ingredients after their usage: Fungicides (against fungal attack), insecticides (against insects), herbicides (against weeds), acaricide (against spider mites), nematicides (against Nematodes), molluscicide (against snails) and rodenticide (against rodents). Pesticides are to be classified in principle as possible causers (also of health damage for humans).

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With support of the EU (via the program **LIFE03/NAT/GR000091**) an information and educational program is currently ongoing on Crete, which refer to the inventory endangerment of the Eleonora's falcon and informs about the causes. Supported by regional and international organizations (see shown brochures), it is tried to sensitise the public for the problem. Beyond that research programs should help to work against this negative development by purposeful measures

The picture is showing an info booth to the action programme “rescue of the Eleonora’s falcon” (in Greece and in particular on Crete) at the port of Iraklion (on the 20th of July 2005). Unfortunately the interest of the Cretan predominantly consists of ignorance and the daily visitors countable at one hand are almost and exclusively tourists; the available brochures however unfortunately inform only in Greek language - and therefore a measurable success of such actions remains more than questionably! So much the more is to appraise the unabated volunteer work of individual environmentalist, who daily (without grind) endure and hope, according to the “principle of the small steps” to have success. We can only hope!



Photo: H. Eikamp (07/2005)

EU-directives from the field of environment: Birds directive [79/409/EWG]; Habitat directive [92/43/EWG]; Environmental impact assessment [85/337/EWG, changed by the directive 97/11/EG]; Groundwater directive [80/68/EWG]; Waste framework guideline [75/442/EWG]; Dangerous waste [61/689/EWG]; Transnational placing of wastes [259/93/EWG] and dangerous materials [76/464/EWG].

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