

THE ACCIPITRIDS OF SERBIA: GLOBAL THREATS AND CONSERVATION STATUS AT EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVELS

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Abstract

Twenty-six species of hawks, eagles, and vultures (family Accipitridae) are present or occasionally inhabit Serbia, although the presence of some species has not been proven with certainty. The aim of this research was to determine the threats to these species at the global level, as well as their conservation status at the European and national levels.

Globally, according to the IUCN, these birds are affected by a range of threats. Nevertheless, the most prominent threat, affecting as many as 23 of the 26 representatives of the Accipitridae family living in the territory of Serbia, is hunting. Also, renewable energy sources represent a significant cause of the population decrease of these birds, considering that 19 of them are threatened by the construction and operation of wind farms. Other threats that stand out in terms of the number of species they affect are pollution from agriculture and forestry, arable land (annual and perennial crops), tree plantations, etc.

According to the IUCN categorization at the European level, the highest number of accipitrids living in the territory of Serbia (22 out of 26) belongs to the category “least concern” (LC), while the bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) is classified as “near threatened” (NT). Three species are considered endangered at the European level, namely the greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) and the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), which are classified as “vulnerable species” (VU), while the steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) is designated as “critically endangered species” (CR) on the territory of Europe. However, there is only one unreliable finding for the steppe eagle in Serbia, so this part of Europe probably does not represent part of the natural range of this bird.

Of the 26 species of hawks, eagles, and vultures recorded in Serbia, 21 are listed in the Annex I of the Birds Directive, while only five are not on this list, namely: the northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), the Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), the steppe eagle, the common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), and the rough-legged buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*). Unlike the other listed species, which are not included in the Annex I because of small concern for their survival, the absence of the steppe eagle on this list can be explained by the fact that its natural range mainly covers the Asian continent, not the European continent. Regarding the Berne Convention, 25 species are included in the Annex I, while only one species is included in the Annex II, namely the steppe eagle. According to the European Birds of Conservation Concern, most bird species belong to one of the so-called SPEC categories. The European population status for eight species is currently considered secure.

The only species that is not protected by the Serbian national legislation is the steppe eagle because Serbia is generally not considered as part of its natural range. Other species are protected at the national level and listed as “strictly protected”, while the only species listed as “protected” is the northern goshawk.