HOME RANGE SIZE AND FORAGING HABITAT USE BY BREEDING LESSER KESTRELS (*FALCO NAUMANNI*) IN AGROECOSYSTEMS OF CENTRAL GREECE

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Understanding the foraging habitat selection and the size of home range of a raptor could improve our knowledge for the conservation of a species particularly in relation to food supply. The Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) is listed as a globally threatened species which suffered large population declines during the last decades. We studied the size of home range and the habitat use of 10 (5 adult males and 5 females) radio-tracked Lesser Kestrels in agroecosystems of Thessaly, central Greece, during the breeding season of 2009. In addition, we sampled four foraging habitat types (cotton fields, cereals, grasslands, and edges) to investigate the spatial and temporal variation of grasshopper densities (being a main prey) in fields within the Lesser Kestrel's home range. Mean 95% of Minimum Convex Polygon (MCP) home range estimates were 70.11 km2 (S.E. = 0.20) and 49.21 km2 (S.E. = 0.15) for males and
females, respectively. The home-range size increased during the progress of the breeding season, but there were no significant differences among successive observations. Within the home range cotton fields and cereals were used by Lesser Kestrels intensively, while grasslands scarcely, as indicated by compositional analysis. Food availability was varied significantly both among different habitat types, and among periods during the breeding season ($p < 0.05$). Nevertheless grasshopper densities in the habitat types sampled did not conform to their pattern of use by the Kestrels suggesting other factors affecting their distribution in their home range.