

The satellite tracking of a rehabilitated Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*)



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Over the past ten years several migratory raptors have been rehabilitated at the Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW). Some of these birds were beyond salvation and were euthanised, while others recovered and were released.

The species received include Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*), Eastern Imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), Steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), Honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), Long legged buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*), Barn owls (*Tyto alba*) and Eagle Owls (*Bubo bubo ascalaphus* or *B. desertorum*), Red-footed falcon (*Falco vespertinus*), Sooty Falcons (*Falco concolor*) and Lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*). All birds were ringed before release but no ring returns have been received and the fate of the birds is unknown.

Greater-spotted eagles are one of the least studied eagles and inhabit open wet forests, wooded marshes and riverine habitats. Its summer breeding grounds range from Eastern Europe to Eastern Siberia. Birds migrate south towards the equator in the winter and are known to visit coastal wetlands in the UAE. In the past a single attempt was made to track a bird from the eastern population which was followed for one season from Mecca in Saudi Arabia to Omsk in Southwest Siberia.

On 28 October 2008, a greater-spotted eagle was brought into the BCEAW after being found exhausted in a water trough in Dibba on the UAE's East Coast by a local farmer. On examination the eagle was found to be healthy with no signs of physical injury. Based on her weight of 2170g we assumed she was female. A few hours after arrival she ate well. As soon as she had regained her strength she was released.

The following day, the eagle was taken to the Mwelah road towards Kalba and released close to its summit (26°59' 12.76 N 56°17' 48.7 E). The first tracking results received 2 days after her release, showed that she flew over the mountains into Oman, she flew for two days into the Empty Quarter in Saudi Arabia before returning to Oman.

She spent a month in Oman foraging around a rubbish dump before flying back to the UAE, following the coast until Kuwait on 28 February. She then made another ten-day foray into Saudi Arabia, before spending almost a month in central Iran. Finally crossing Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan into Kazakhstan where she spent the summer, from 5 June until 29 September, near Lake Tengiz in south west of Astana. She then flew south into Pakistan and one month later reached her wintering grounds, east of Karachi in the Indus delta.



Greater-spotted eagle rehabilitated at the BCEAW.



Satellite transmitter being fitted to the Greater-spotted eagle



Greater-spotted eagle shortly after release on 2 November 2008.



Greater-spotted eagles movements from release up until 19 January 2010.

The Conservation Workshop for Large Raptors, held at the BCEAW in 2005, revealed that there was no information on the origin, flyways or destination of large raptors migrating through the Arabian Peninsula.

In collaborations with colleagues at the National Avian Research Centre (NARC) and the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) in Sweihan a 30g solar powered satellite transmitter was fitted to the eagle.

She has remained in this region for the three months. Results to date suggest that rehabilitation of an exhausted migratory raptor can be beneficial.