Enhancing the adaptation of the Eleonora's Falcon to climate change by improving its nesting habitat quality

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The LIFE Nature project "LIFE ElClimA" (LIFE13 NAT/GR/000909) aims at enhancing the adaptation of the Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonorae*) to climate change in the Aegean Sea, the core of the species' global breeding distribution, by tackling some of its main existing pressures and limiting factors at breeding sites, including predation by introduced rats and limited availability of nesting sites providing sufficient protection from heat, sun exposure and wind. For this purpose a series of field surveys for rat eradication and construction of artificial nests were carried out between 2015 and 2018 in some the species' key colonies within the southern extent of its distribution range in the Aegean Sea, an area that is expected to be the most vulnerable to climate change. Rats were successfully eradicated from two uninhabited island complexes in the Cyclades and of NE Crete, consisting of 7 islands with a total area of 705ha, which host approximately 6% of the Eleonora's Falcon national breeding population. Rodenticide baits were used in bait stations to minimize risks to non-target species. Additionally, more than 1000 artificial wooded and stone nests were constructed and established in these two island complexes, as well as in other colony sites in the southern and central Aegean Sea. The highest short-term response of the Eleonora's Falcons to the interventions was observed on small islets, which are more affected by the rat predation pressure and limited availability of suitable nesting sites.

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