



## STATEMENT REVIEW

on a dissertation for obtaining a educational-scientific degree "doctor" (PhD) in the field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation".

**Author of the dissertation:** Gradimir Zhelyaskov Gradev, PhD student at the department of Agroecology and Environmental Conservation At Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

**Topic of the dissertation:** "Restoration of the lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*, Fleischer, 1818) as a nesting species in Bulgaria"

**Reviewer:** Assoc. Prof. Ivelin Aldinov Mollov, PhD, University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", Faculty of Biology, Department of Ecology and Environmental Conservation (field of higher education 4. Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.3. Biological Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystems Conservation"), appointed as member of the scientific jury by order № РД-16-1318/23.11.2021 by the Rector of AU.

### 1. Relevance of the problem.

The topic of the dissertation is extremely relevant, which reveals not only new aspects of the biology and ecology of the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*), but is also a step towards developing adequate conservation measures for the conservation and restoration of this endangered species in the country.

### 2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The goal and tasks are set accurately and modern methods are used to study and restore the Lesser Kestrel in Bulgaria as a nesting species, namely: direct release of birds in the wild, artificial nests, and study of nesting parameters, marking with standard and specialized colored PVC rings, tracking with radio and satellite transmitters. The PhD student shows his excellent methodological and practical training as a field researcher.

### 3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The dissertation includes 113 pages, and the main results are illustrated with the help of 19 figures, 24 tables and 18 photos (presented in 4 appendices).

### 4. Discussion of the results and used literature.

The doctoral student knows the problem very well. This is evident both from the detailed literature reference, which he evaluates and analytically, which helps to solve the goal and tasks, and from the long period of work dedicated to the problem and the many consultations and collaborations with many experts in the field.



"Acknowledgements").

## **5. Contributions to the dissertation.**

The dissertation has indisputable scientific and mostly scientifically applied contributions.

### **Scientific contributions**

The scientific contributions consist in the establishment of the national numbers of the populations, the breeding parameters and the breeding success of the species, the study of wandering, migration and wintering, etc.

### **Scientific-applied contributions**

The main scientific-applied contribution of the dissertation is that for the first time in Europe the process of restoration of the Lesser Kestrel is described as a nesting species in a country where the species has completely disappeared, as well as some methodological aspects for studying the ecology of the species.

## **6. Critical remarks and questions.**

My main remark to the dissertation is its relatively short volume, with some chapters included, whose place is in the Abstract rather than in the dissertation itself. These are Chapter 9 - "Scientific publications in connection with the dissertation", Chapter 10 - "Citations ..." and Chapter 11. "Participation in scientific conferences". If these three chapters are removed, the total volume of the dissertation falls to 104 pages.

## **7. Published articles and citations.**

In the list of publications, the PhD student lists 15 publications. Publications 1 and 3 are published in the Scientific Works of AU-Plovdiv and carry a total of 10 points. Publication 2 from the list is an Action Plan for the Conservation of *Falco naumanni* in Bulgaria, which, however, does not have an ISBN. This publication carries no points. Publications 4 and 15 are published in the Yearbook of Sofia University and carry a total of 11.67 points. Publications 5, 6, 8, 11 and 12 are conference participations (5, 6 and 11 presented with abstracts only) and do not carry points. Publication 7 of the list has been published in a series of books entitled "Greifvögel und Falkneri", which contain articles of a popular science nature, and this publication also does not carry points. Publication 9 is published in the Biological Journal of the Linnean Society, a prestigious journal with Q1, which carries 5.71 points. Publication 10 is a chapter of a book that can bring 3.33 points. Publication 13 is published in the Journal of Biogeography, also a prestigious journal with Q1, which also carries 1.17 points. Publication 14 is published in Ecologia Balkanica, a journal with Q4, that carries 10 points. The presented publications carry a total of 41.88 points, which fully covers and exceeds the required by the law 30 points on indicator G.

The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

## CONCLUSION:

Based on the research methods learned and applied by the PhD student, the correctly performed experiments, summaries and conclusions, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of The Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it as **POSITIVE**.

I allow myself to suggest to the esteemed Scientific Jury also to vote **positively** and to **award** Gradimir Zhelyaskov Gradev the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" (PhD) in the field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, professional field 4.4. Earth Sciences, scientific specialty "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation".

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Plovdiv

## THE STATEMENT-REVIEW

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