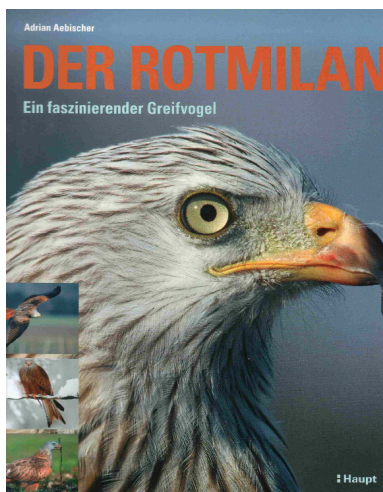


Book review

**Aebischer A 2009: Der Rotmilan. Ein faszinierender Greifvogel. Haupt Verlag, Bern, 232.
ISBN 978-3-258-07417-7. Price 49.90 CHF.**



The famous Swiss ornithologist Adrian Aebischer offers his readers a beautiful book full of high quality colour photographs of a well known European bird of prey – the Red Kite. The work was also contributed by Broch L., Cantin M., Cantin R., Cheda F., Jaquier S. and Weisshaupt N. The book opens with a description of the Red Kite, its characteristic features, discriminative comparison with other species, description of its vocalizations, relations and cross breeding potential with the Black Kite. Typical habitat, prey and hunting strategies are described. Substantial part of the book is devoted to population and nesting ecology, clutch size, number of fledged young and nesting success. Perhaps the most interesting part of the book is concerned with detailed description of the geographic range of this species in individual countries. The author also reports data from local specialists in almost all countries (approximately 100 ornithologists) including those, working in Slovakia (aided with most recent data from F. Bednar, B. Maderič, M. Noga, S. Pčola, R. Rigg and T. Zuna-Kratky) and in the Czech Republic (D. Horal and L. Schröpfer). Large part of the book is concerned with wintering of the Red Kite in Europe and its migration strategies. Special attention is paid to the formation of common night roosts, often with more than

100 individuals. The last part of the book discussing the Red Kite is a chapter on its vulnerability and conservation potential. The closing part of the book includes a list of references, useful addresses and internet links (about Red Kite) and glossary.

What are the highlights of this publication? Quite certainly there are the high quality photographs covering the whole life cycle of the Red Kite from wintering and migration to breeding and post-breeding wandering. In total, 27 European photographers have contributed pictures of generally very high quality. Detailed description of the geographic range of this species in European countries was already mentioned above. In the beginning of the 21st Century, there were between 20 818 and 25 409 breeding pairs in Europe. Most of them were in Germany, Spain and France. Some information is also presented about countries where the Red Kite only move through or winter. Great plus has to be credited to the author for including information from regional ornithological journals providing often very interesting and surprising information (e.g. a case of Red Kite pair breeding in South Moravia on a completely dry tree).

Unfortunately the book lacks citations in the text body. This greatly compromises the follow up of references. Book format of 240×265 mm is also rather uncommon. This format was chosen perhaps to allow better presentation of photographs. Probably because of publisher's expectations basic information about other Central European bird of prey species including photographs was included. According to my opinion this is absolutely redundant and quite disturbing in this monograph. Altogether 35 pages could have been rather devoted to the target species.

What is the conclusion? This book provides a complex presentation of the target species, the text is well readable and images generally excellent. The Broad cooperation of many ornithologists required for the compilation of such a whole European monograph is exemplary. The name of this work – The Red Kite, fascinating bird of prey is well chosen in my opinion. The book is also offered at a reasonable price. I can recommend this book to all the fans of birds of prey and thanks to the many pictures this work will make a suitable present also for non-ornithologists.

Libor Schröpfer