

## CASE STUDY – BIODIVERSITY IN MOL GROUP

### *Migrant falcon and red kestrel at Algyő Gas Technology*

*To address the current biodiversity challenge, we are actively participating in projects tailored to achieve environmental and biodiversity protection targets. As of late we have identified two rare bird species residing in the Algyő gas technology center. Colleagues from MOL are closely monitoring the birds and in turn providing the Hungarian Ornithological and Peregrine Nature Conservation with very important information on migration falcons. MOL is supporting the new initiative by setting up an observer camera on the towers overlooking the nesting trays.*

### **Background**

Located in the Southern part of Hungary, Algyő gas technology is Hungary's biggest oil field made up of some 1,000 wells.

In the autumn season of 2006 several employees at Algyő Gas Technology (AGT) spotted bodies of dead birds on the company site during separate occasions. At a time when bird flu had much media attention, the discovery of pigeon and small waterfowl carcasses created quite an alarm that prompted an investigation into the case. Fortunately the results of the investigation revealed the death of the birds was not caused by the deadly H5N1 influenza virus (bird flu virus). Rather, in all cases death was a result of injuries sustained from attacks by a falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) commonly known as the migrant falcon. The migrant falcon is a medium-sized bird of prey, and a very rare species in our country. The falcon was first observed on AGT's 64-meter high iso-butane and iso-petane towers, and the bird is a regular guest at AGT. However, as its name suggests, migrant falcons' visits are seasonal and they occur from the beginning of March until the end of September.

### **The project**

Migration falcons do not build nests when brooding; instead they utilize large cracks and crevices on high walls or cliffs. Having such fore knowledge and realizing the existing attraction the AGT towers pose for the falcons, several AGT employees who are hobbyist fowlers scaled up the towers to set up boxes that serve as nests for the birds. Such an initiative, financed by MOL, has provided these fowlers an opportunity to study and monitor the falcons, and in turn their findings provide the Hungarian Ornithological and Peregrine Nature Conservation with very important information on migration falcons.

Another falcon (*Falco tinnunculus*) has also been known to use the AGT tower nest boxes for brooding as well. The falcon, commonly known as the kestrel, usually broods in ready made nests on tree tops, quarries, cliffs, ruins and high roofs. A kestrel is protected in Hungary and has an "intangible" value of 50 000 HUF. According to the observations made on the AGT nest boxes (Algyő fledge) successful kestrel brooding, took place in 2007 and 2008 with six and four chicks respectively.

In addition, there are plans to monitor the birds even more closely in future because MOL is supporting a new initiative to setup an observer camera on the towers overlooking the nesting trays.

**Lessons and future plans**

As there is little information known about the birds, research and observations are still in the running. However, so far we have gained some insight in the characteristics and behaviours of the birds that will help us determine future actions.

**Conclusion**

The project and initiative is still in its infant stages therefore additional efforts are needed to maintain its progress. As no substantial information is present, a better understanding of the behaviours and traits of the birds would help to decide appropriate future actions to take.

Nevertheless the opportunity that exists for us as an organisation is exciting because we have a great chance to contribute significantly to the Hungarian biodiversity knowledge base through our initiative on these rare falcons.