

2014-2015

NATURE CONSERVATION

SKUA Nature is a private company with unique characteristics. The team is made of highly motivated naturalists, who strongly believe that the projects carried on by SKUA can give important contributions to nature conservancy, through concrete actions and by raising money for local research studies and actions. In all the reserves we develop, we activate actions dedicated to nature conservancy and biodiversity studies using funds coming from nature tourism activities and in collaboration with various public or private organizations.

We have proved, in these last few years, that if the work is done fully respecting habitats and species ecology, and adopting dedicated actions to improve feeding, stop over or breeding sites, the results are immediate and positive also for rare or very localised species.

And so our Network's hides and reserves indeed broadens the range of opportunities and create an ever-growing laboratory on the relation between nature and human activities.

In collaboration with:





RESTORATION OF BREEDING SITES FOR AMPHIBIANS

In the Wild Lucania reserve, in collaboration with the Center for Naturalistic Studies Nyctalus Onlus, various small drinking troughs for wildlife have been created, in an area where there were no more water reserves left, due to the general abandonment of the countryside. Various old wells have been recovered and are operating again, so that wildlife can use them safely, as these sites are protected and monitored. In one of these sites two very important southern Italy endemic species are now breeding: Appennine yellow-bellied Toad and Italian Newt.



NEW COLONIES FOR BATS

Thanks to the contribution of Terna SPA and Schwegler / Natur Protection we have installed tens of bat-boxes in the reserves of Palude di San Genuario and Fontana Gigante, as well as on many high voltage pylons in the middle of rice fields: our goal is to increase the breeding and wintering sites for bats in an area heavily compromised by intensive agriculture. A research on this topic has started, in order to survey the area and assess the result of this project.



PROTECTION OF THE MONTAGU'S HARRIER NESTS

This project is made in collaboration between SKUA and LIPU Bird-Life Italia: 70% of the incomes from the use of photo-hides will be destined to conservation projects inside the partner reserves, as well in close by areas in case of particular conservation priorities. In 2015 the first photo hides of this project have been launched, inside the Ostia Lido CHM Reserve, near Rome. Thanks to a very high number of photographers, we have been able to get funds to use for protecting various Montagu's Harrier nests in the countryside to the northwest of Rome. With a solid group of volunteers, the involvement of the land owners, and the purchase of electrified fences against terrestrial predators, we are sure that the future of this small population will be brighter.

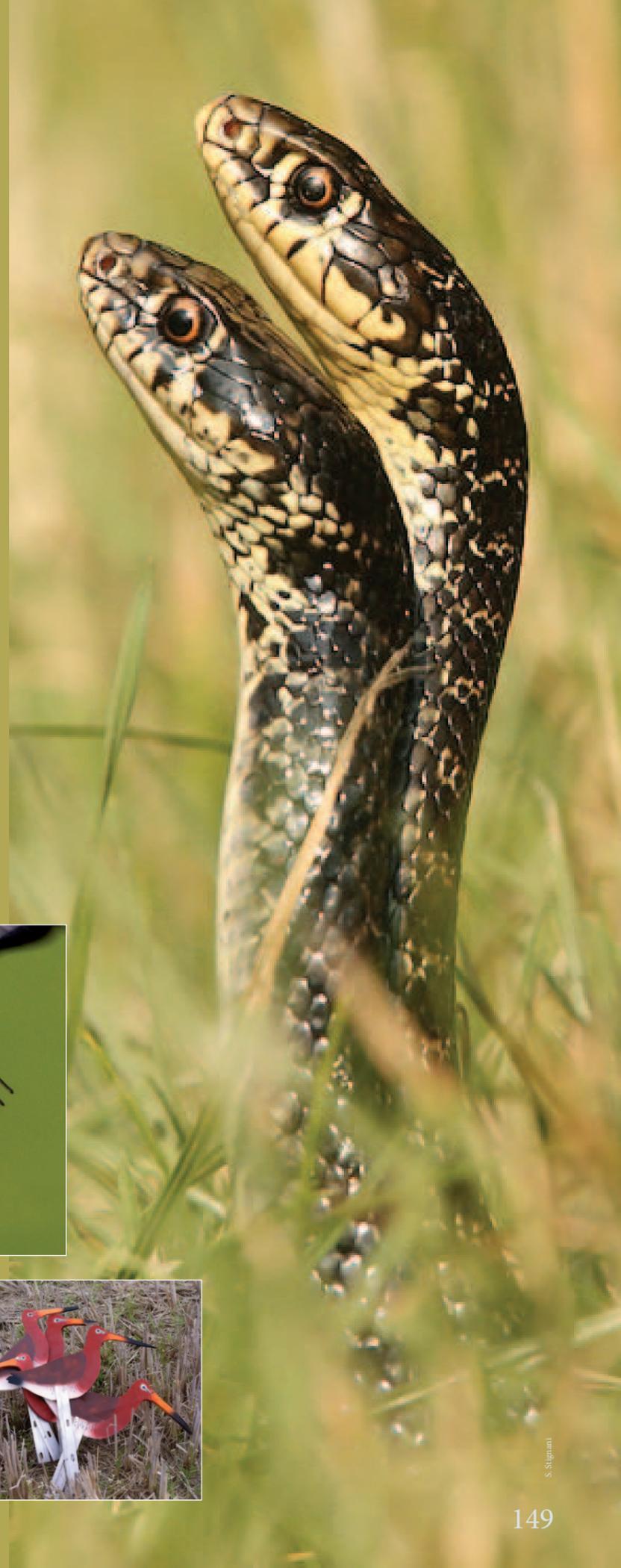


REPTILE SURVEY

Thanks to a percentage on the incomes from the use of photo hides in the reserves of Parco del Po, we have contributed to the purchase of the necessary materials in order to start an important survey of the reptiles, and snakes in particular, in the whole park. Reptiles are not very well studied, though they can be a very important ecological key for assessing the health of biodiversity of an area. During the next few years, thanks to this survey, we will have a better knowledge of the distribution of reptiles and of the more threatened species, and therefore it will be possible to activate dedicated conservation actions.

A SAFE NEST FOR BLACK TAILED GODWITS

The only Black tailed Godwit population breeding in Italy is in the rice fields of the Vercelli province. Since 2014 we have started to support conservation interventions for this species: sadly every year several nests are destroyed, due to agricultural works. Thanks to the use of wooden templates and the rental of some land portions, we have started to have the first results, but starting from autumn 2015, in the Cascina Spinola estate, we will begin to restore habitats, including wetlands and permanent meadows, on a 15 hectares area, that we hope will be the new stronghold for this beautiful species.





ADDITIONAL FOOD FOR VULTURES AND KITES

In Spain, in the reserves of La Parrilla and Los Campanarios de Azaba, we run important feeding points for scavenger birds, which offer fantastic photo opportunities as well as a precious additional constant food source for protected species such as Egyptian and Cinereous Vultures, and Red Kites. The current management of the carcasses in the large breeding farms has caused a lot of problems in these last years for these species: a general lack of food, the use of antiinflammatories which are lethal for raptors and a growing competition with the more adaptable and widespread Griffon Vulture, have made necessary the launch of dedicated projects in order to ensure an important and safe controlled food supply.



A NEST NEXT TO THE HIDE

In all our Network's reserves, when we build new photo hides we always pay particular attention not to build them close to nests, colonies, or sensitive areas. But our job consists also in restoring and improving the areas around the hides, in order to make them more interesting for birds. The results we have obtained in just a couple of years are incredible: rare species like Bittern, Black winged Stilt, Avocet, Western Marsh Harrier and others, have started to breed (often for the first time inside the reserves) in front of the hides or in their immediate vicinity, proving how by working with care, know-how and technical skills, great results can be obtained, successfully combining fruition with conservation.



NEW EARTHEN WALLS FOR BEE EATERS

In the Parco del Po we have been working for three years now, each spring, for restoring, cleaning or creating new earthen walls for Bee eaters. These actions are made inside quarries where gravel is digged for; thanks to special agreements made with the local mining companies and the Park administration: year by year, we locate the more suitable areas for bee eaters, we stop the works in that particular area for the breeding season and we optimize the area for their needs. The number of breeding pairs is constantly increasing, without causing any trouble to the mining activity; and this proves once again how the relation between man and nature can be sustainable.



OUR RULES

Helping nature conservation means also following some good practices and habits when exploring and living the natural environment. Because of that, in addition to concrete actions to increase and conserve biodiversity, we do also invest time and resources to constantly improve our working system and most of all to help our clients to reach the best ethical standards. Our dispositions are very serious and include some fundamental rules that we do use and apply in every situation where we work.



ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY FACILITIES

Wherever it's possible we create and build hides and facilities that have a low environmental impact using natural local materials and taking into consideration also aspects as comfort and efficacy. In almost every situation it's possible to avoid the use of concrete, therefore reaching an almost zero impact on the territory.



PERIODICITY

Depending on the areas where we work and on the phenology of the species, we decide the best period when we can work to construct or modify facilities avoiding to disturb animals. Moreover field-works are reduced to a minimum as we do prepar ex-situ the majority of the hides.

GLASSES

Some species are not disturbed by the shooting noise of a camera or by a sudden movement of a wooden window, however we do prefer to use reflecting glasses in almost all the situations, to avoid any bother and guarantee to photographers closer pictures of animals in a more natural behaviour.



RULES AND COMMUNICATION

Thanks to the support of Daniel Steenhaut, a series of very nice comics are available to inform people that use hides about the most common wrong habits. A funny but efficient way to inform our clients and make them feel responsible, but also to give advices on what should not be done in order to get the best photographic opportunities.



In collaboration with:



www.daniel-steenhaut.be



**YOU ARE A NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER, NOT A TROPHY HUNTER
BE PATIENT AND ENJOY YOUR TIME.**

