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Short communication

AN UNUSUAL CASE OF CRIPPLING AND DYING OF TWO RED-FOOTED FALCON (*FALCO VESPERTINUS*) IN VOJVODINA (YUGOSLAVIA)

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During 1991 colonies of Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*), were investigated at certain localities in Vojvodina. Each day a colony in black locust forest (DR44 after UTM 10 x 10 km) near Melenci was inspected.

The black locust forest is located on the left side of a road between Melenci and Bašaid along 3 km from Danube-Tisa-Danube canal towards Bašaid. This 15-25 m wide forest belt is bordered by the highway and village road running along fields of sunflower, corn, clover and wheat.

Red-footed Falcon use for breeding the abandoned nests of Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*), while their reproduction period coincides with corn maturation.

On 22 July of 1991 a male of Red-footed Falcon was observed crouching on a small pile of straw on stubble-field along the village road. He did not try to escape. After inspection it was observed that bones of the left wing were heavily crumbled while a leg was double broken. The bird weighted only 98 g. We fed it with locusts and took with us to the Institute of Biology (Novi Sad), where it died on 23 July. We gave it to the ornithological collection of the Natural History Museum, Belgrade (BEO).

Another, but dead Red-footed male, certain meters far from forest edge on a stubble-field along the village road, was found. That bird was decapitated and with no legs, while also a number of fractures of wing bones were observed. The crippled bird body weighted 99 g.

We are convinced that the injuries and death of Red-footed Falcon males are caused by a combine harvesting on 22 July. The combine certainly waved treetops disturbing the nests with 15 days (or more) old chicks. Adults were possibly reacted by attacking to combine. This may be confirmed by the similar adverse behavior of the adults when we checked nest content. Frequently, a group of four to five and sometimes seven to eight adults circled over trees. Some dived against intruder. Sometimes the birds even touched with their wings shoulders and head of a man climbing up the tree.

However, certain other circumstances might also cause death of Red-footed Falcon. Groups of three to five birds were observed catching insects rushed off the corn in front of the harvesting combines. Falcons were dangerously close to the machine on the move. In one or the other way, mortality of Red-footed Falcon is often connected with combine.