

# AVOCETTA

Journal of Ornithology founded by Sergio Frugis

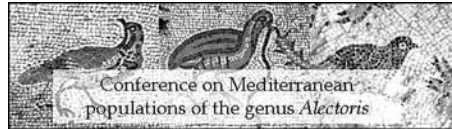


**CISO**

Centro Italiano Studi Ornitologici

ISSN 0404-4266

Volume 37 - N. 2 - 2013



Proceedings of First Conference on the Mediterranean populations  
of the genus *Alectoris*. Status, Conservation and Management

Alessandria 14-15 November 2011

Editors

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Recommended citation for the Proceedings

Sorace A., Malacarne G., Meneguz P. G., Spanò S. (eds.) 2013. Proceedings of the first conference on the Mediterranean populations of the genus *Alectoris*. Status, Conservation and Management. Alessandria 14-15 November 2011, *Avocetta* 37: 75-152.

Recommended citation for the articles

Jakob C., Ponce-Boutin F., 2013. Recent tools for population abundance estimation adjustment and their use in long-term French red-legged partridge survey network. In Sorace A., Malacarne G., Meneguz P. G., Spanò S. 2013 (eds.), Proceedings of the first conference on the Mediterranean populations of the genus *Alectoris*. Status, Conservation and Management. Alessandria 14-15 November 2011, *Avocetta* 37: 77-82.

# Preface

On 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011 the first conference on the Mediterranean populations of the genus *Alectoris* was held in Alessandria. The conference was organised by the University of Eastern Piedmont Amedeo Avogadro, the University of Turin and the ATF (Associazione Ambiente Territorio e Formazione) of Alessandria. Many game and wildlife scientists, students, technicians, park guards and foresters, reaching Alessandria for this event, acknowledged the great opportunity of sharing the advancement of researches in these specific topics. Sessions covering the major aspects of partridges biology and ecology gave the opportunity for fruitful exchanges of ideas and to launch new initiatives in the study, conservation and management of Galliformes. The main lectures shed light on each topic while oral and poster contributions detailed the situation of national and Mediterranean research.

To avoid that this great amount of information and experience would be lost in the mist of the literature, we decided to publish the Proceedings of the Conference including the original papers presented during the meeting. Not all the original talks and posters resulted in submitted manuscripts as the authors of communications included in some sessions (Physiology and behaviour, Health and parasites) preferred to submit their papers to specialistic journals. Therefore the Proceedings include 15 papers presented in the sessions 'Status and Conservation', 'Ecology and population dynamics', 'Hunting' and 'Census and techniques'.

The range of genus *Alectoris* extends from the Mediterranean to the Middle East to North Africa and Asia where the species inhabit open country with dry continental climate. The genus is present in Europe with four species: rock partridge *Alectoris graeca*, red-legged partridge *A. rufa*, barbary partridge *A. barbara*, and chukar *A. chukar*. Nevertheless, the papers almost entirely focused on studies about rock partridge (7 papers) and red-legged partridge (6 papers). In addition, one article deals with the comparison of some ecological aspects between the genus *Perdix* and the genus *Alectoris* and one with the taxonomy of barbary partridge. Another species, the chukar, was quoted in some paper for the problems (threaten to the gene pool integrity, negative consequences to prey-predator equilibrium and food availability, diffusion of parasitic and infectious diseases) that the illegal restocking with this species outside its natural range might constitute for local populations of rock partridge and red-legged partridge.

All European species of the genus *Alectoris* are of conservation concern (BirdLife International 2004). According to the papers of proceedings the main problems that affect the conservation of these species resulted to be: I) the release of captive-reared individuals not belonging to local species or subspecies, II) poaching, III) change of habitat, IV) no managed hunting pressure and v) predation by generalist predators.

As expected, the contributions of Italian authors in this first conference were prevailing. In future editions, we strongly hope for an increase of contributions by other European and north African experts dealing with biological and ecological aspects in chukar and barbary partridge.

Finally, we thank the following referees for their invaluable assistance in dealing with manuscripts: Antonio Borgo, Massimo Brunelli, Marco Gustin, Stefano Larsen, Francesco Riga, Stefano Sarrocco, Valter Trocchi. We thank also the Conference staff (Mohamed Banni, Marco Grenna, Ennio Negri, Irene Pellegrino, Fabrizio Silvano, Paolo Tizzani, Maurizio Tomada) for the great work.

The Editors

**Alberto Sorace, Giorgio Malacarne, Pier Giuseppe Meneguz, Silvio Spanò**

