

# Roller Estates

## Providing for Roller on the Plains

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* is a widespread summer visitor to much of Europe where over half of its breeding range lies, where it is thought to have declined leading to its designation as Vulnerable by the IUCN. As a cavity nester, Roller distribution is largely tied to availability of nest sites within its range.

In North Cyprus, Roller are typically associated with the Karpaz Peninsula and the North Coast where habitats are favourable for their nesting due to the availability of cavities in old trees, moreover we recently determined these two sites as IBAs for the protection of this species among others. However, other potential breeding sites of the species, such as Mesarya Plain, were overlooked.

Mesarya Plain, once forested, is the most productive agricultural area of the island. Farming practices here are modernised and relatively intense. Through this area Roller regularly occur around waterways where they occupy and raise young in burrows of the European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*. Although this area provides lots of food, nesting ability of Roller is limited due to low cavity availability.

Recent studies in Hungary and Serbia have shown that where nest boxes are provided in somewhat atypical habitats - grasslands not unlike the Mesarya - reproductive output of Roller can equal or even exceed that observed at more typical sites. So, through this project funded by Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME) we are establishing Roller nest box communities in two of our IBAs on the Mesarya Plain, committing to long-term monitoring of our established Roller communities to develop a significant study site in the region.

As an IUCN red listed bird, the development and monitoring of Roller populations in these important habitats will in return strengthen their existing conservation designations.



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