

# The Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) in Austria: in favour of nest boxes?

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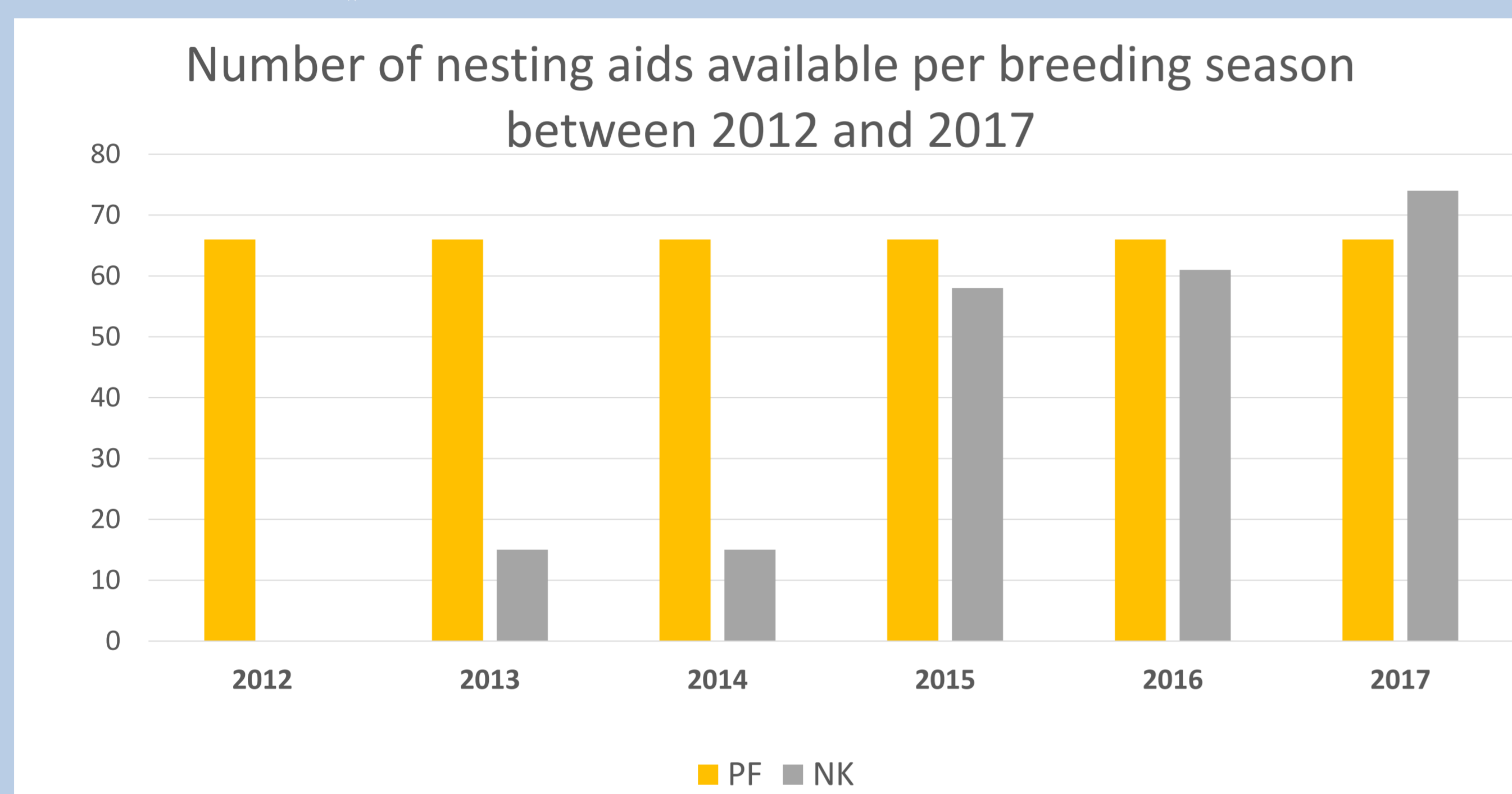
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## The project

- The saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) reaches its westernmost distribution in the east of Austria. As only two breeding pairs remained in Austria in the 1970s, a conservation project started in 2010.
- The project provides safe breeding places in the form of artificial nesting aids, either as platforms or as nest boxes on high voltage power pylons.
- In 2019 48 saker falcon pairs could be observed in Austria, 34 reproduced successfully and reared 109 fledglings. 101 young saker falcons fledged from artificial nesting aids.

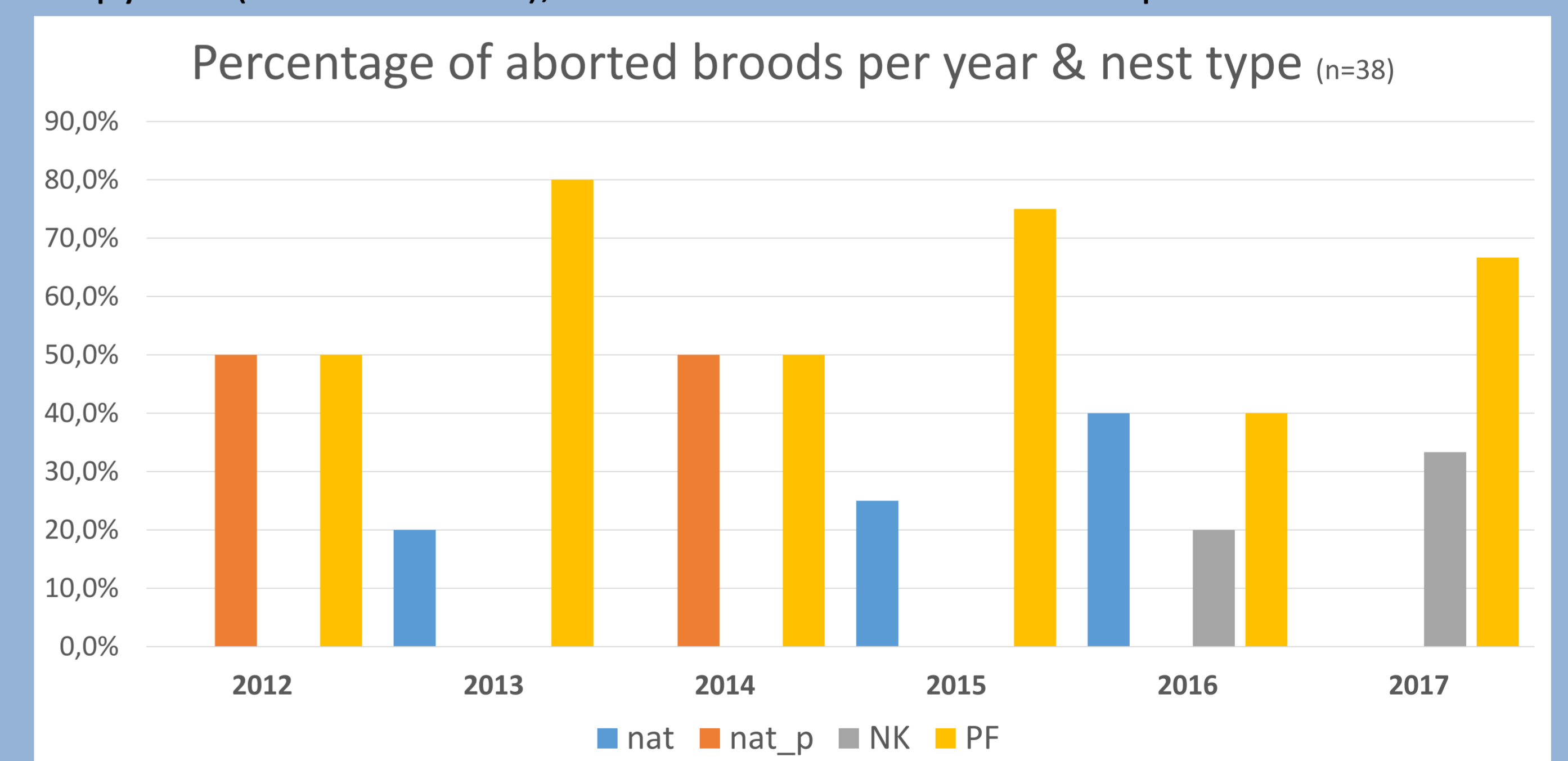
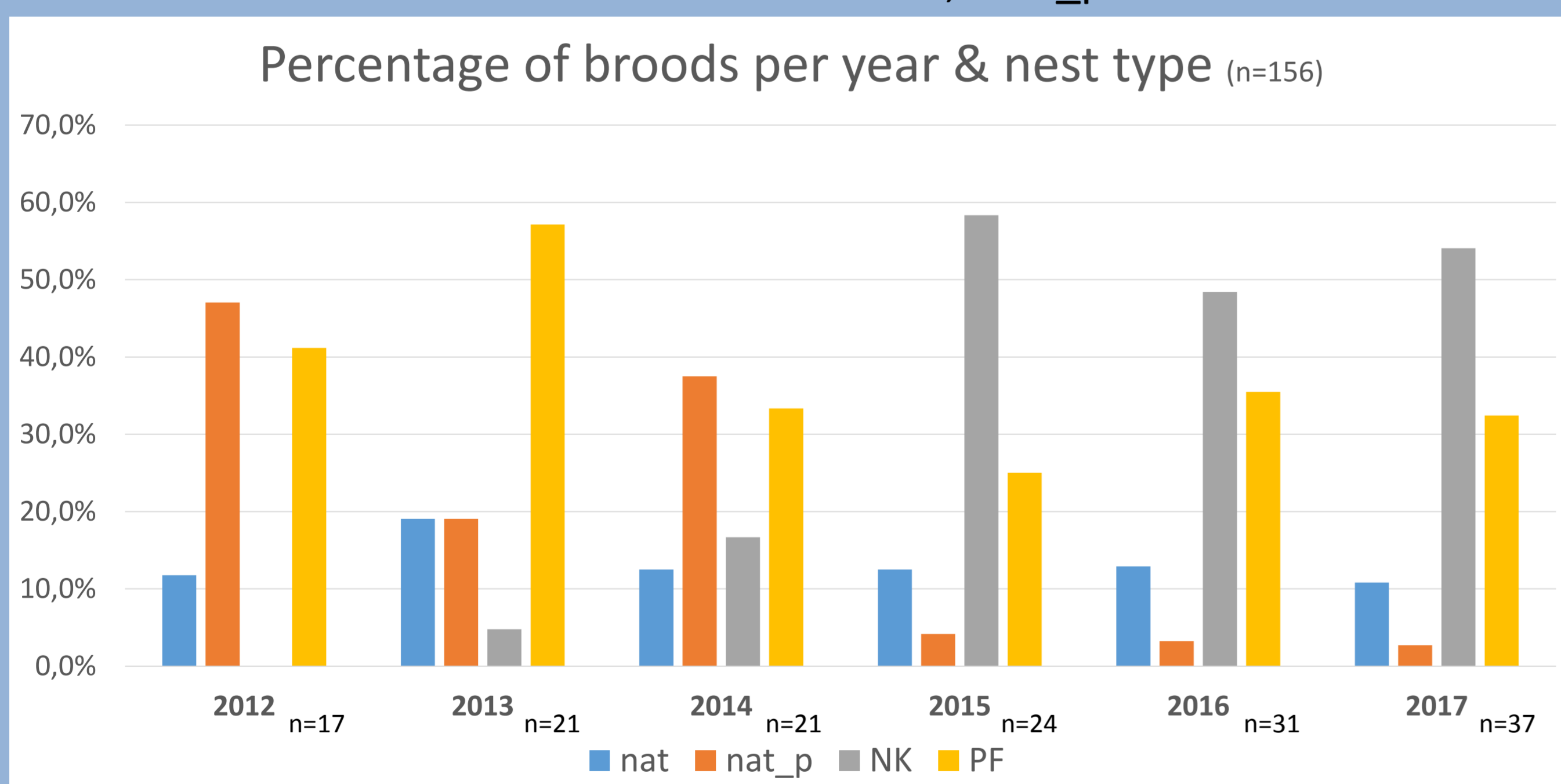


## Nest boxes (NK) vs. platforms (PF)

- Only platforms were available until the breeding season 2013. By 2017 66 platforms and 74 nest boxes were placed on high voltage power pylons.
- Platforms are similar to natural nest sites and less visible from the ground, while they offer less protection from adverse weather conditions like precipitation and wind.
- Nest boxes are a more closed structure, which offers comparatively better protection from precipitation and wind and might therefore lead to better reproduction success. Their visibility from the ground is high compared to the platforms.

## Results

“nat” = natural nest sites on trees, “nat\_p” = natural nest sites on power pylons (i.e. crow nests), “NK” = nest boxes and “PF” = platforms.



## Discussion

- Over the years, the provision of secure artificial breeding places on high voltage power pylons lead to a tremendous increase of the saker falcon population. Today saker pairs in Austria breed almost exclusively in these nesting aids.
- We analysed data from 156 saker falcon broods between 2012 and 2017. We found that up to 80% of broods on platforms are aborted each year, while only up to 33% of broods in nest boxes are unsuccessful.
- A reason for the unsuccessful broods on platforms could be the comparatively wet weather conditions at the easternmost distribution end of this species, which mostly lives in rather dry steppes. Nest boxes could offer better weather protection than platforms for the chicks in spring during the breeding season.

