

Eagles fly to Iran, rack up huge roaming charges

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A group of Russian scientists was hit by crippling roaming charges after some of the eagles the researchers were studying flew to countries with high roaming charges, including Iran, Turkmenistan, and Pakistan. The birds were outfitted with electronic devices that tracked their locations and sent back status updates a few times a day.

The scientists have been tracking eagle migration patterns since 2015. This year, the scientists were tracking 13 endangered steppe eagles who spend summers in northern latitudes in Russia and Kazakhstan. In the fall, the birds fly south, passing through countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The BBC reports that one eagle, named Min, was particularly expensive for the scientists. He spent his summer in Kazakhstan out of range of cell phone towers. During this period, his tracking device queued up hundreds of messages to send later.

When he flew south into Iran in early October, the device connected to a cell phone tower and sent the queued messages. Each cost the researchers 49 rubles (\$0.77)—more than five times the expected price, according to The New York Times. The

researchers say that these charges pushed the researchers over their budget for cellular service.

The team launched a crowdfunding campaign to help cover the costs, raising over \$5,000 by the weekend. The researchers also convinced their wireless provider, MegaFon, to write off some of the charges and give them better roaming rates going forward.

The roaming charges have generated so much attention that other wireless providers have started offering free wireless service, the researchers told the *Times*. So the scientists may not have to worry about roaming charges next year.

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