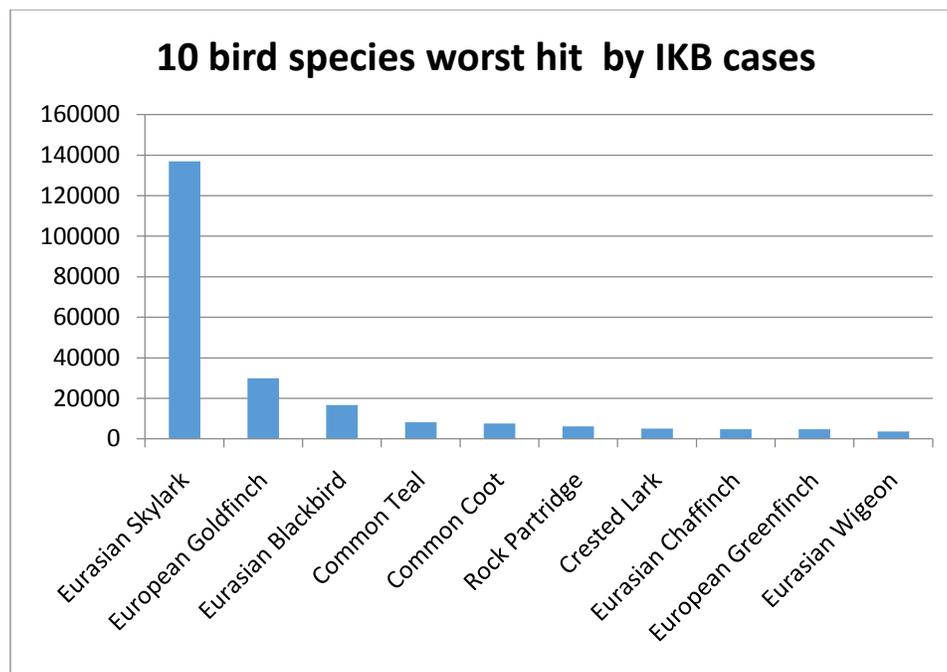


Assessment of the Impact of Illegal Killing on Vultures in Albania (2010-2018)

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Albania has been among the 10 Mediterranean countries worst hit by the Illegal Killing of Birds (IKB) with circa 270 thousand birds illegally killed every year during during 2004-2014 (Brochet *et al.* 2016).

The most problematic areas were located at the coastal part of Albania while the species suffering the most from IKB were the Eurasian Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Eurasian Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) and Common Coot (*Fulica atra*).



Following calls from civil society and public groups, the Albanian Parliament adopted in 2014 a two year hunting ban that was extended again in 2016 for five other more years bringing thus the ban till 2021.

The first year of the hunting ban showed signs of reduction of IKB pressures related with poaching in coastal area although it stopped short of controlling it in other parts of the country.

Furthermore, other forms of IKB methods such as trapping and poisoning were not tackled at all.

Vultures, although a rarity in the country, have often been subject of poisoning, trapping and poaching with evidences registered even in recent years.

An estimation of the impact of IKB on vultures in Albania was undertaken in 2018 following the same methodology used by BirdLife International for the Assessment of the impact of Illegal Killing of Birds (IKB) in the Mediterranean basin for the period 2004-2014.

The 2018 estimation, based on expert opinion and data collected through relevant stakeholders and social media groups, shows that at least 1-3 individuals of vultures species are approximately killed every year.

Griffon Vulture is often subject of poaching as it occurred in 2008 in Kukes, north of Albania, where an individual was killed for taxidermy purposes and it is today exposed in a restaurant in the city.



Another Griffon Vulture was trapped in Lura (north of Albania) after being apparently injured due to electrocution. Although it somehow recovered, this individual was kept as a pet species for almost two years until its fatal electrocution in 2015.



In addition, a tagged Griffon Vulture (from Serbia) was trapped in 2016 in Fushe-Kruja (nearby Tirana) showing signs of poisoning. It is very likely that the species was killed afterwards despite AOS efforts to release it.



Meanwhile, in the stronghold of Egyptian Vulture in southern Albania, cases of poisoning are still occurring as a measure taken by locals who use poison baits to control either large or small carnivores perceived as predators of livestock and animal husbandry.

In 2016, a local shepherd admitted to our trusted sources that a Golden Eagle and several others birds of prey were poisoned due to such a practice.



Despite lack of clear evidences on poisoning, it is very likely that Egyptian Vultures suffer from secondary poisoning too.

As a summary, IKB is still having an impact on vultures in Albania. Considering the rarity of the species, it seems that IKB plays quite a role in limiting vulture populations in the country.