Project Bright Future for the Black vulture LIFE14 NAT/BG/649

Vultures back to LIFE
**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Project duration:** 2015-2022, 7 years

**Budget:**
- Total budget: 3,483,411 EURO;
- EU contribution: 2,607,648 EURO;

**Partners:**
- Green Balkans – Coordinating beneficiary;
- Wild Flora and Fauna Fund;
- Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF);
- GOBEX;
- EURONATUR;
TARGET AREAS
Expected results - birds released
Import, adaptation and release of:

- 48 Black vultures
- 60 Griffon vultures

Current results

- 58 Griffon vultures imported from Germany, France, Spain, Czech republic, Netherlands, Hungary

- 12 Black vultures imported from Spain – to be released in the spring by the soft release method
First 3 Black vultures released by the hacking method

Latvia, Riga zoo – 2 vultures
Czech republic, Ostrava zoo – 1 vulture
Riga

Cumulative distance - 11 180 km

Track from Hack to last position - 2 500 km

Distance by air from Hack to last position – 700 km

Wintering in Missolonghi area
Boyan

Wintering in Iraq border area

Cumulative distance - 6 940 km

Track from Hack to last position - 2 050 km

Distance by air from Hack to last position - 1 840 km
Ostrava – poisoned!?

Cumulative distance - 4 570 km

Track from Hack to last position - 1 160 km

Distance by air from Hack to last position – 790 km

Ostrava found dead in South Peloponnese!
One of our major goals is the rehabilitation and breeding of rare and endangered species through "ex-situ" conservation.

To accomplish this goal, Green Balkans established the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Center in Stara Zagora in 1995. It is the only Rescue center in the country.
Breeding vultures

- 1 breeding pair Black vultures
- 1 breeding pair Griffon vultures
- 1 breeding pair Bearded vultures
- 1 breeding pair Egyptian vultures

Capacity for rehabilitation of vultures in the WRBC

4 aviaries for recovery of vultures

1 Room for rehabilitation of vultures (3 cages)

Clinic, surgery room, incubation room, etc. facilities.
### 2015 - 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Released</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitted dead</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captive breeding</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to zoos</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died in the WRBC</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of admitted vultures</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Graph showing vulture statistics](image-url)
Mortality causes

Analysis of 3 poisoned vultures carried out in National diagnostic research veterinary institute - Stara Zagora.

Samples taken from kidney, liver and crop.

Result - Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors - Phosphorus organic and carbamate compounds.

### Mortality causes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possibly poisoned</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision with vehicle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision with electricity pylon</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrocution</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastric Trichobezoar obstruction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of dead birds** 27

Total number of dead vultures - 27
ANALYSIS OF SAMPLES

Collected **22 samples** from Gyps fulvus and **16** from other species collected, to be analysed.  

Currently there are no cases registered of birds poisoned by vet drugs in Bulgaria!
Vulture poisoning.
The current state in Bulgaria.
Common threats, concerns and recommendations

By KIRIL K. Dimitrov, PATHOLOGIC ANATOMY UNIT, DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL AND CLINICAL PATHOLOGY, FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, Stara zagora, 6000
Introduction

- Since the middle of the 20th century, poison baits were widely and systematically used in Bulgaria to control the predator and raptor populations.

- This practice was further encouraged by state legislation polices for “pest control”. Although vultures remained protected by low as “useful birds”.

- Later this method was banned by joining the Bern convention during 90s. Further legislation measures were adopted during the establishment of Natura 2000 network and introducing the Birds and Habitat Directive.

- However, the illegal use of poison baits is still practiced for extermination of wild predators, birds of prey, feral and stray dogs, and any other unwanted animals (e.g. wild boar, horses etc.).
Detection of wildlife poisoning incidents is equivocal to the efforts invested to perform field surveys.

Recently, several Life projects gained significant success in recognition of poisoning, proper processing of poisoned animals, development of anti-poison awareness campaigns, work groups and judicial mediation.

Since the beginning of 21st century records and documentation of poisoning incidents have been kept, especially regarding vulture mortality, by national wild birds NGOs.
From the very beginning of the 20th century, when cyanide or arsenic compounds were used for inselective predatory control.

During the middle of the 20th century strychnine was introduced and widely and systematically used by national forestry and veterinary official, and hunters as well.

After 1962 vultures were listed as protected species, but the main reason for their population decline was not officially illegalized.

After the 90s, BSPB project members in the Eastern Rhodopes started to conduct the first toxicological analyses of dead vultures, since then no records and no surveys were available.

Since 2003 this practice was introduced in wildlife conservation in Bulgaria with the establishment of the National working group on poisoning incidents which was coordinated by FWFF within the BVAP. The FWFF, Green Balkans, BSPB, BPPS, Balkani Wildlife Society and others work on their own projects.
Current situation in Bulgaria

Factors associated with the main reasons for use of poisonous substances and baits in Bulgaria in regard to eliminate the following species from natural environment of:

- Wolf (in 80% of the cases as apex predator, Parvanov et al, 2018)
- Other large mammalian predators (bears, jackal, fox)
- Feral and stray dogs and cats
- Shepherd dogs, hunting dogs
- Aggressive dogs
- Free ranging life stock (e.g. horses, cattle, sheep, pigs)
- Small birds of pray praying on poultry, pigeons and doves
Current situation in Bulgaria

Social groups which are most likely to use poison to kill wild life, domestic animals and life stock according to the reasons mentioned above:

- hunters
- poachers
- game keepers
- dove and pigeon keepers
- farmers
- people that like to abuse or kill animals
Current situation in Bulgaria

Preferred targets and activity patterns

- Random, dynamic and hardly predictable poisoning incidents
- Usually in areas occupied by extensive animal husbandry and higher population density of large predators
- No seasonal restriction, but most likely during March-May due to livestock movement to low-land summer pastures
- Higher impact over conservation dependent species in certain periods, which differs from species to species, depending on their foraging habits
Poisoning accidents of vultures in Bulgaria during the project

During March, 2017 - the most recent and important one in Kresna Gorge – 18 birds were found dead and assuming up to 30 more affected, Carbofuran poisoning following a local wolf conflict, demolishing the local vulture breeding population, established after years of hard work. Poisoned birds found from 1 km to 65 km away, and at about 20 km from the roosting and breeding sites.
Current threats

- *Strychnine* is no longer available, but Category I pesticides are widely sold and accessible in the agricultural and veterinary pharmacies.

- Mostly Carbamates, Organophosphates, rodenticides are used and more often some “house-hold chemicals” as ethylen-glycol (antifreeze) are used as well.

- NSAIDs used to treat farm and domestic animals such as diclofenac, flunixine meglumine could pose a serious threat to vulture population as documented in other regions.

- Barbiturates used for anaestesia or euthanasia also are of a great concern, some anitparazitilcal drugs as diazionone, also

- Attention should be focused and on animal carcass collection sites, piths and illegal animal carcass and waste dumping sites

- Exposurre to antibiotic residues in animal carcasses, offal, possible cause of GIT disbacteriosis and MO resistance
Incidence of animal toxicity cases as reported Pathology Dept., VMF, Trakia University, Stara Zagora
Thank you for your attention!