



LIFE BIRDS on POWER LINES - Conservation of threatened birds through retrofitting of hazardous overhead powerlines in Natura 2000 sites in W Bulgaria

LIFE16 NAT/BG/000612



Photo: Pavel Stepanek

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Project description:

Background

The Danube river in the western part of Bulgaria, on the Via Aristoteles bird migration route, is one of Europe's most important areas for the conservation of priority bird species listed in the Birds Directive. However, bird populations in Natura 2000 network sites in this area are under pressure due to nearby urban and industrial centres, transport corridors, and, in particular, hundreds of kilometres of encircling bird-unsafe overhead (20 kV) power lines. On one hand, power lines are used for perching, hunting, and even nesting (e.g. white stork and European roller). On the other hand, the same power lines cause the death or severe injury of a large number of resident and migratory birds through electrocution and collisions. The LIFE for Safe Grid (LIFE12 NAT/BG/000572) project found electrocution and collisions accounted for 76.4% and 23.6%, respectively, of registered mortalities around 20kV power distribution lines. International, European and national action plans for Dalmatian pelican, great bittern, European roller, Saker falcon, and priority species of geese, vulture and eagle have identified electrocution and collisions as significant factors causing high mortality. There is a need for targeted studies on the effects of power lines on priority bird species, and the large-scale implementation of measures to insulate power lines.

Objectives

The LIFE BIRDS on POWER LINES project's long-term aim is to protect the breeding, wintering and migrating populations of threatened bird species by reducing mortality caused by electrical infrastructure. The project's target species are among the most adversely affected species, and are all listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

The project will contribute to its long-term aim by:

- Identifying the medium-voltage power lines posing the most serious hazard for wild birds inside and in the immediate proximity of key Natura 2000 network sites in Western Bulgaria;
- Halting unnatural mortality among birds caused by electrocution on hazardous electricity pylons in priority areas of the project's Natura 2000 network sites and in key corridors between these sites;
- Reducing unnatural mortality among birds caused by collisions with overhead power lines in these areas;
- Securing safe nesting sites for the white stork population in Western Bulgaria;
- Increasing the capacity for solving conflicts between birds and electricity distribution infrastructure across Bulgaria; and
- Boosting public and stakeholder support to help solve the conflict between wild birds and overhead power lines, and by promoting mutual benefits for both biodiversity and local people.

Expected results:

- Identification of the medium-voltage power lines inside and in immediate proximity to key Natura 2000 network sites in Western Bulgaria posing the most serious hazard for wild birds (including all the project's target species), by establishing a GIS database, mapping areas of potential conflict, and producing a detailed report;
- Halt to unnatural mortality among wild birds caused by electrocution on hazardous electricity pylons in priority areas in Natura 2000 network sites and in key corridors between them, with the retrofitting of 4 000 pin-type pylons, 1 200 metal frame type pylons and 200 switch towers;
- Reduced unnatural mortality among wild birds caused by collision with overhead power lines in priority areas in Natura 2000 network sites and in key corridors between them, with 120 km of aerial conductors (40 km of triple power lines) in priority areas marked with 'bird diverters' to reduce bird-collisions by 90%;
- Secured safe nesting sites for the white stork population in Western Bulgaria: 900 white stork nesting platforms installed on electric pylons and no cases of electrocution of storks or burnt nests recorded;
- Increased capacity for solving conflicts between wild birds and overhead power lines across Bulgaria, through development of bird-safe pylon standards for Bulgaria, the development and installation of 40 prototype pylons (20 pin-type and 20 metal frame type), and no electrocuted birds recorded under these prototype pylons;
- Guidelines with best practices for Bulgaria and abroad, and specialised information materials, produced and distributed among key stakeholders; and
- Increased public and stakeholder support to help solve the conflict between wild birds and overhead power lines, and mutual benefits promoted for biodiversity and citizens, through 25 information boards, a white stork publicity campaign and various dissemination materials.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Species - Birds

Keywords

endangered species, migratory species, geographic information system, public awareness campaign, environmental impact of energy, preventive measure

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 2009/147 - Conservation of wild birds - Birds Directive (codified version of Directive ...

Target species

Aegypius monachus Anser erythropus Aquila chrysaetos Aquila clanga
Aquila heliaca Aquila pomarina Botaurus stellaris Branta ruficollis Buteo
rufinus Ciconia ciconia Circaetus gallicus Coracias garrulus Falco cherrug
Falco vespertinus Gyps fulvus Haliaeetus albicilla Neophron percnopterus
Pelecanus crispus

Natura 2000 sites

SCI	BG0000166	Vrachanski Balkan
SCI	BG0000182	Orsoya
SCI	BG0000239	Obnova - Karaman dol
SCI	BG0000322	Dragoman
SCI	BG0000366	Kresna - Ilindentsi
SCI	BG0000396	Persina
SCI	BG0000615	Devetashko plato
SCI	BG0001028	Sreden Pirin - Alibotush
SCI	BG0001040	Zapadna Stara Planina i Predbalkan
SCI	BG0001389	Sredna gora
SPA	BG0002001	Rayanovtsi

SPA	BG0002002	Zapaden Balkan
SPA	BG0002003	Kresna
SPA	BG0002005	Ponor
SPA	BG0002006	Ribarnitsi Orsoya
SPA	BG0002009	Zlatiyata
SPA	BG0002017	Kompleks Belenski ostrovi
SPA	BG0002053	Vrachanski Balkan
SPA	BG0002054	Sredna Gora
SPA	BG0002072	Melnishki piramidi
SPA	BG0002074	Nikopolsko plato
SPA	BG0002078	Slavyanka
SPA	BG0002083	Svishtovsko-Belenska nizina
SPA	BG0002084	Palakaria
SPA	BG0002090	Berkovitsa
SPA	BG0002096	Obnova
SPA	BG0002098	Rupite
SPA	BG0002102	Devetashko plato

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	CEZ Distribution Bulgaria AD
Type of organisation	Large enterprise
Description	CEZ Group is a leading utility company in Central and South-East Europe. In Bulgaria, it includes electricity distribution company, CEZ Distribution Bulgaria (the beneficiary), as well as divisions responsible for supplying and trading electricity. CEZ Distribution Bulgaria operates and manages the electricity distribution network in Sofia, Pernik, Plevan, Lovech, Vratsa and other parts of Bulgaria, constructs new electricity distribution and metering systems, and maintains facilities and equipment. The company's environmental policy includes the implementation of measures to insulate power lines to reduce bird mortality.
Partners	Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, Bulgaria

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE16 NAT/BG/000612
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Duration	01-OCT-2017 to 31-DEC -2022
Total budget	2,647,481.00 €
EU contribution	1,832,933.00 €
Project location	Severozapaden(Bulgaria Balgarija) Yugozapaden(Bulgaria Balgarija)

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