



Egyptian Vulture New LIFE - Urgent Action to Strengthen the Balkan Population of the Egyptian Vulture and Secure Its Flyway

LIFE16 NAT/BG/000874



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Project description:

Background

The Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is the only long-distance migrant among European vulture species. Although its distribution range extends throughout Euro-Asia and Africa, it has become increasingly threatened by human activities. The rapid decline observed in the past 20 years has led to its re-listing in the IUCN Red List as 'endangered' at global level, as well as at EU level. Egyptian vulture is strictly protected by multilateral and regional environmental agreements, such as the EU Birds Directive, Bern Convention, CMS and CITES.

The core Balkan population in Bulgaria and Greece, with additional pairs in Albania and the Republic of Macedonia, migrates to wintering grounds that largely overlap with resident populations in West Africa, the Sahel, East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Most European breeding pairs (80%) are concentrated in the Iberian Peninsula. Elsewhere the population is highly fragmented, with about 230 pairs nesting in the Caucasus (stable), but only 80 in the Balkans and less than 10 pairs in the Apennine peninsula (both critically endangered). Thus, the Balkan pairs act as a bridge between the Asian and the Iberian populations, and are essential for the conservation status of the species on the whole continent.

Objectives

The Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project is one of the most ambitious ever vulture

conservation initiatives. Its implementation is crucial in a European and greater international context, because stabilising the Balkan population of Egyptian vulture in Bulgaria and Greece is a pivotal prerequisite to securing survival of the species in its global range. The project aims to reinforce the vulture population in the EU's easternmost range by delivering urgent conservation measures that eliminate major known threats in the breeding grounds and along the flyway in the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East (with the involvement of 14 countries in Africa and the Middle East).

The objectives of the project are in line with the European Species Action Plan (SAP) foreseen in the Birds Directive, and in particular with those set in the Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of the Balkan and Central Asian Populations of the Egyptian Vulture (EVFAP).

Specific project objectives are to:

- Minimise the loss of mature individuals in the breeding grounds due to deliberate or accidental poisoning;
- Reduce mortality due to electrocution and collisions with energy infrastructure;
- Ensure that food availability is not a limiting factor in the breeding grounds;
- Mitigate the threats at the bottleneck and congregation sites along the flyway, including but not limited to loss by poisoning, direct persecution and electrocution;
- Reinforce the Balkan breeding population by deploying a targeted restocking programme aiming to boost population recovery; and
- Increase awareness of and support for Egyptian vulture conservation by engaging relevant stakeholders.

The European SAP and the EVFAP considers that the proposed project measures are necessary to avoid the extinction of the Egyptian vulture's Balkan population. Notably, the expected conservation gain is based on experience gained through a previous LIFE project, Return of the Neophron (LIFE10 NAT/BG/000152), which demonstrated the most productive conservation strategies.

Expected results:

- Reduction of adult mortality by poison, electrocution and collisions, and/or direct persecution resulting in a stable trend for the Balkan population of Egyptian vulture;
- Increase in the breeding population by an average of one active territory per year;
- Increase of breeding productivity by at least 15%, to reach the optimal reproductive output registered among the stable populations in France and Spain;
- Stabilisation of the population trend, and enhanced conservation status of migrating and wintering individuals;
- Improvement of the conservation status of project sites via reductions in the intensity of threats addressed by the project;
- Local capacity built for delivering ex situ conservation towards saving the population;
- Active involvement of relevant stakeholders in species conservation, including over 5 000 local people and all responsible public authorities from selected key sites in breeding grounds;
- At least 2 million people in all countries along the flyway informed about the project resulting in an important increase of public awareness on the

- conservation threats to the Egyptian vulture; and
- A stable network of organisations established, both governmental and non-governmental, that works towards halting the decline of the population of the species in its EU easternmost breeding grounds and in the congregation, bottleneck and wintering grounds along the flyway.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Target species

Neophron percnopterus

Natura 2000 sites

SPAGR1110002DASOS DADIAS - SOUFLI
SPAGR1440005ANTICHASIA ORI KAI METEORA
SPAGR1110009NOTIO DASIKO SYMPLEGMMA EVROU
SPAGR1130011KOILADA FILIOURI
SPAGR1130012KOILADA KOMPSATOU
SPAGR1440006KORYFES OROUS KOZIAKA
SPAGR2130009OROS TYMFI (GKAMILA)
SPAGR2130010OROS DOUSKON, ORAIOKASTRO, DASOS MEROPIS, KOILADA
GORMOU, LIMNI DELVINAKIOU
SPABG0002012Krumovitsa
SPABG0002013Studen Kladenets
SPABG0002014Madzharovo
SPABG0002019Byala Reka
SPABG0002025Lomovete
SPABG0002029Kotlenska planina
SPABG0002038Provadiysko-Royaksko plato
SPABG0002044Kamchiyska planina
SPABG0002058Sinite kamani - Grebenets
SPABG0002071Most Arda
SPABG0002106Yazovir Ivaylovgrad
SPAGR1110010OREINOS EVROS - KOILADA DEREIOU
SPAGR2130011KENTRIKO ZAGORI KAI ANATOLIKO TMIMA OROUS MITSIKELI
SPAGR4310013ASTEROUSIA ORI (KOFINAS)

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) has been working for 21 years to preserve the country's wild birds and their habitats. It is the Bulgarian partner of BirdLife International. The BSPB has 14 branches and local groups, and operates two Nature Conservation Centres and five regional offices. It implements Important Bird Areas and has established a functionally-connected network of SPAs – the cornerstone of the European Natura 2000 network.
Partners	Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals – The CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia (CMS Raptors MoU), Germany Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), Greece World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Greece Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Royal Charter (RSPB), United Kingdom BirdLife International - Middle East Regional Office, Jordan Doğa Derneği, Turkey BirdLife International - Africa Partnership Secretariat, Kenya A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute - University of Jos, Nigeria Green Balkans, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE16 NAT/BG/000874
Duration	01-JUL-2017 to 31-DEC -2022
Total budget	5,848,458.00 €
EU contribution	4,386,343.00 €
Project location	Associated Bulgaria (BG)(Bulgaria Balgarija) Severozapaden(Bulgaria Balgarija) Severen tsentralen(Bulgaria Balgarija) Severoiztochen(Bulgaria Balgarija) Yugoiztochen(Bulgaria Balgarija) Yugozapaden(Bulgaria Balgarija) Yuzhen tsentralen(Bulgaria Balgarija) Anatoliki

Makedonia, Thraki(Ellas) Kentriki
Makedonia(Ellas) Dytiki Makedonia(Ellas)
Thessalia(Ellas) Ipeiros(Ellas) Ionia Nisia(Ellas)
Dytiki Ellada(Ellas) Sterea Ellada(Ellas)
Peloponnisos(Ellas) Attiki(Ellas) Voreio
Aigaio(Ellas) Notio Aigaio(Ellas) Kriti(Ellas)

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