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The Balkan Team









































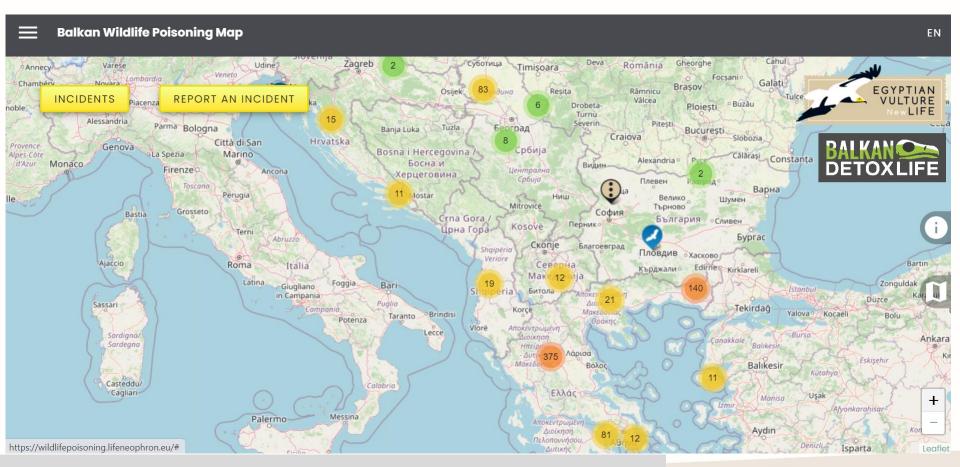


Wildlife poisoning in the Balkans





Identified as one of the most important conservation problems for scavenger species, particularly for vultures.



The more you look, the more you find

Drivers & land users behind this practice





- ✓ To kill predators (mainly large carnivores but not only) that cause losses in livestock, beehives, game or crops
- ✓ To kill working dogs (sheepdogs & hunting dogs):
- Land use conflicts
- √ To kill feral dogs
- ✓ To control fox populations:
- Predates on game
- Creates problems during hunting dog training
- ✓ To solve personal disputes

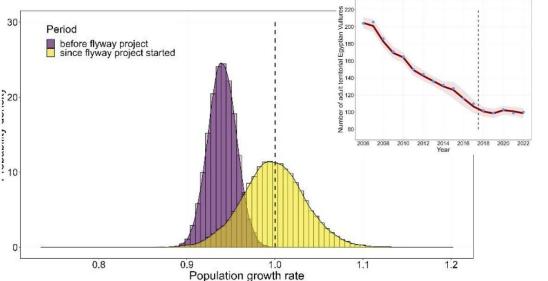
- ✓ Livestock breeders
- ✓ Hunters
- ✓ Beekeepers
- ✓ Farmers
- ✓ Neighbours...

Egyptian vultures in the Balkans

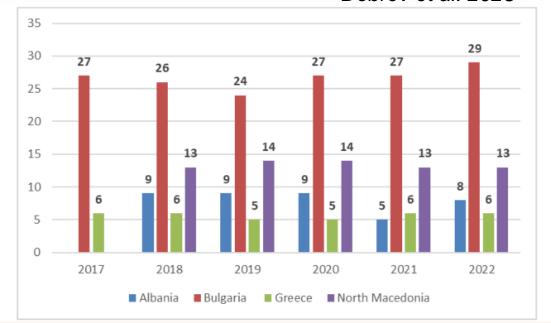




Around 50 Egyptian vultures were poisoned







Expert assessment of the priority to mitigate three major anthropogenic threats to EV along the Eastern Mediterranean flyway

	Country	Poisoning	Electrocution/collision	Direct persecution
	Albania	4	3	1
Europe	North Macedonia	4	2	1
E	Bulgaria	4	3	2
	Greece	5	3	1

	Turkey	2	5	2
East	Syria	3	2	4
ale E	Lebanon	3	2	4
Middle	Jordan	2	4	1
	Saudi Arabia	5	4	2

	Egypt	3	4	2
frica	Ethiopia	4	5	0
Afr	Nigeria	2	1	5
	Niger	2	1	4

Oppel et al. 2021

2 LIFE projects





2011-2016

The Return of the Neophron



➤ The Balkan regional component: Bulgaria and Greece

Prevent the extinction of the Egyptian vulture in Bulgaria and Greece by addressing the major threats for the species.

2017-2022

Egyptian Vulture New LIFE Project



The Balkan regional component: Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, North of Macedonia

The Flyway component: the Middle East and Africa

LIFE16 NAT/BG/000874

Reinforce the easternmost European Egyptian Vulture population by delivering urgent conservation measures by eliminating major known threats at breeding grounds and along the flyway.

Eye opener!









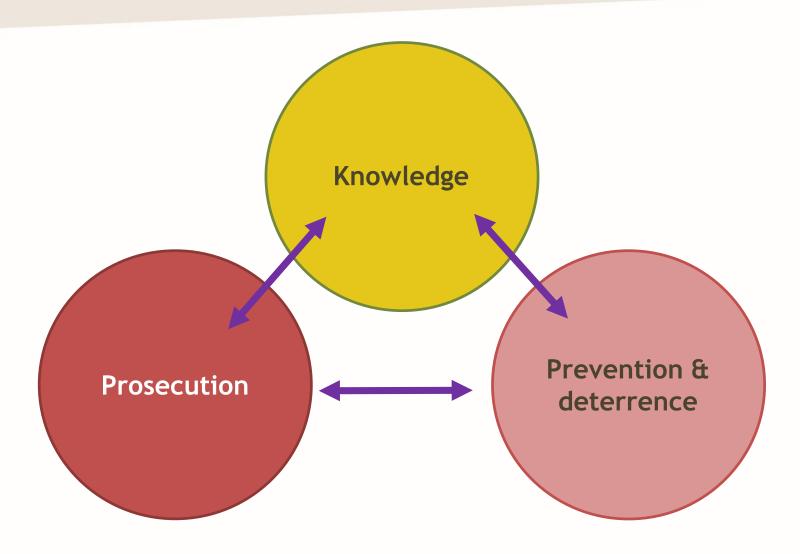


New approach was needed!

Multi-level approach





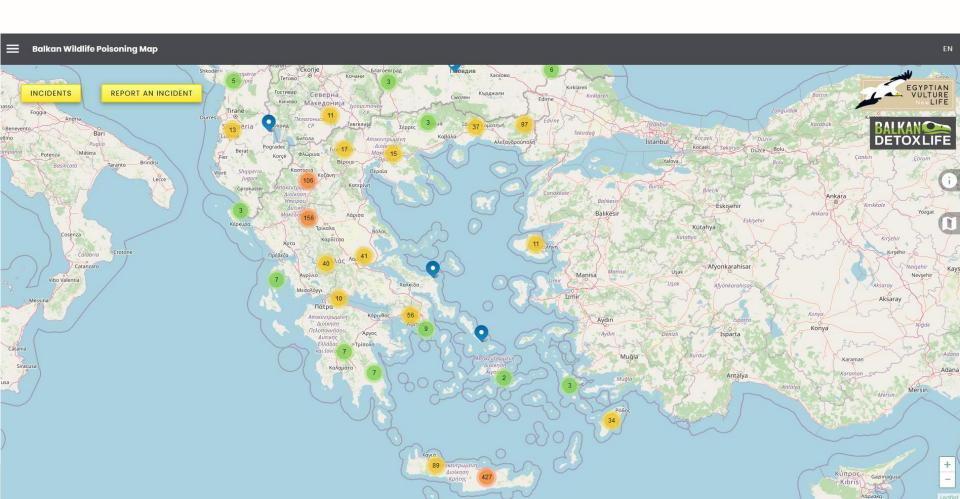


Monitoring actions → Knowledge & prosecution





- Creation of an online Balkan Poison DB and map
 - ✓ Updated data on poison events in the Balkans
 - ✓ DB maintained by NGOs → Aim to be managed by Ministry of Environment



Advocacy & policy actions → Knowledge, prevention & deterrence, prosecution





Endorsement of Local Action Plans against Wildlife Poisoning at national level sets action protocols and distributes responsibilities among national and local authorities (LAPs first approved in 2018 as MD → Upgraded to JMD in

2022).



Huge step BUT

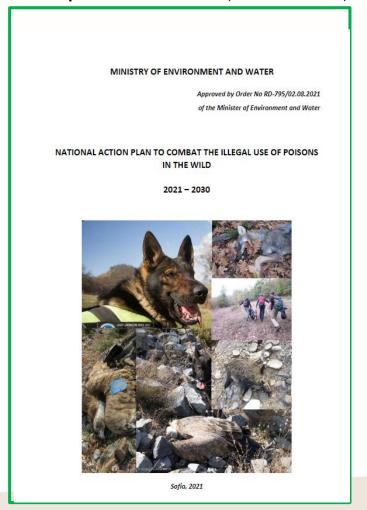
the effectiveness of the LAPs will depend on their proper implementation and the active involvement of all the authorities and bodies involved.

Advocacy & policy actions → Knowledge, prevention & deterrence, prosecution





In 2021, the Minister of Environment and Water approved the "National Action Plan to combat illegal use of poison in wild (2021-2030) developed by the BSPB.



Enforcement actions → Knowledge, prevention & deterrence, prosecution





> In 2014, creation & operation of 2 first Antipoison Dog Units in the Balkans



Period: 2014 - 2022





Patrols	497
Kilometers	1217
Number of poison incidents	112
Poisoned animals	219
Poison baits	245





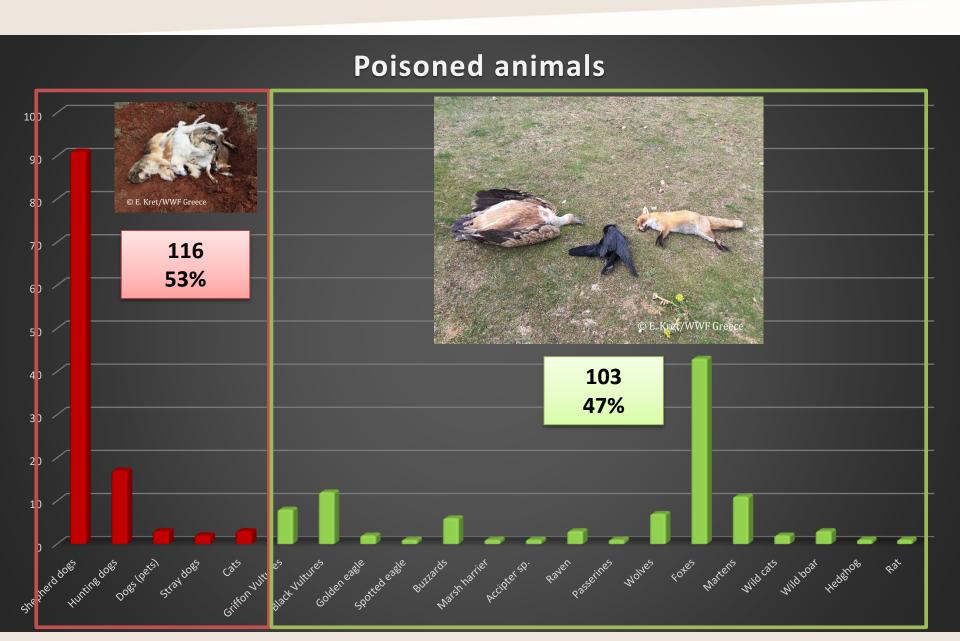


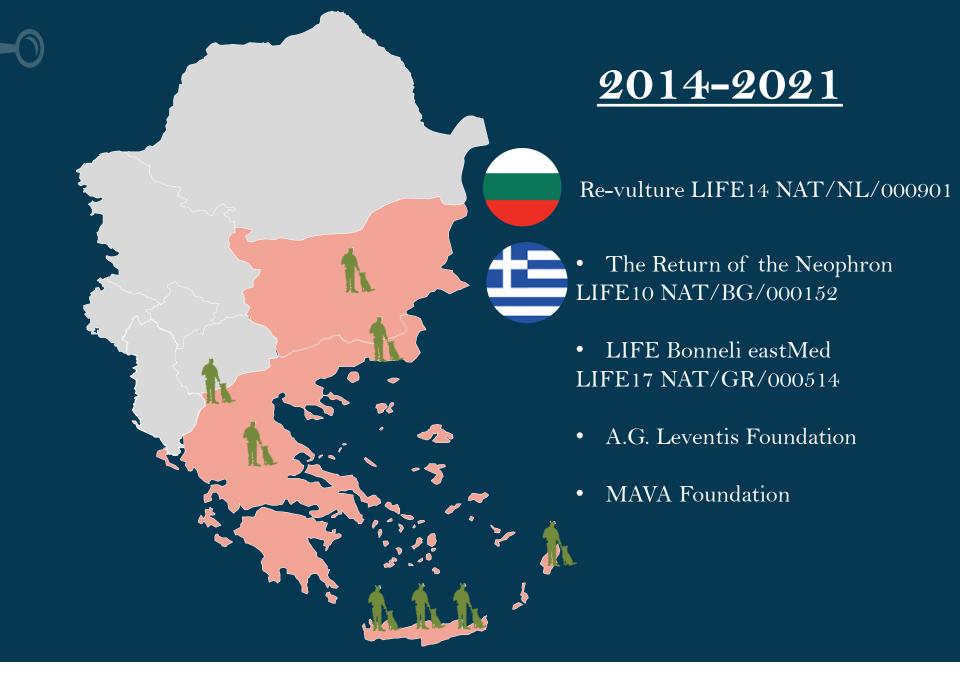


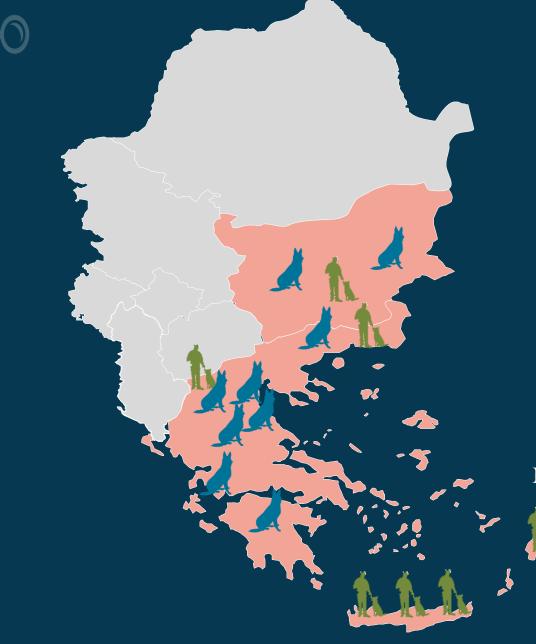
The use of poison baits affects both wildlife and domestic animals











2022





Ministry of the Interior - Police





Ministry of Environment and Energy-Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency

Preventive and innovative actions → Prevention & deterrence





- ➤ Testing of methods to reduce human-wildlife conflict due to predation of livestock → Fight drivers behind the use of poison!
 - Distribution of local races of sheepdogs and creation of network of breeders
 - ✓ Veterinary care of sheepdogs
 - ✓ Testing of two alternative predator deterrent methods (fladry fences and foxlights)







- Distribution of livestock guarding dogs (LGDs) and creation of network of LGD breeders:
 - ✓ Greek races: Molossus of Epirus & Greek shepherd dog

✓ All LGD microchipped and vaccinated

√ Vet care provided

√ 131 dogs distributed







> Testing of fladry fences:

22 farms

- ✓ Method used in US, Canada, etc against wolves.
- ✓ Never tried before in GR by livestock breeders (simple & turbo)
- ✓ Fladry design improved to better adapt to Greek mountain conditions
- ✓ Particularly useful for transhumant stockbreeders (temporality of method)
- ✓ Monitored with trap cameras to check efficiency



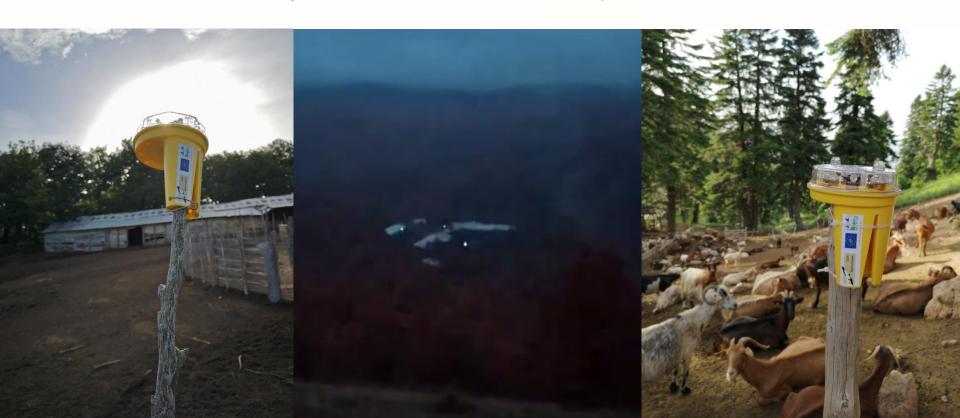




> Testing of foxlights:

49 farms - 330 foxies

- ✓ Method first designed in Australia, proved efficient against many predators
- ✓ Never tried before in GR by livestock breeders
- Random flashes of light imitating human presence
- ✓ Monitored with trap cameras to check efficiency



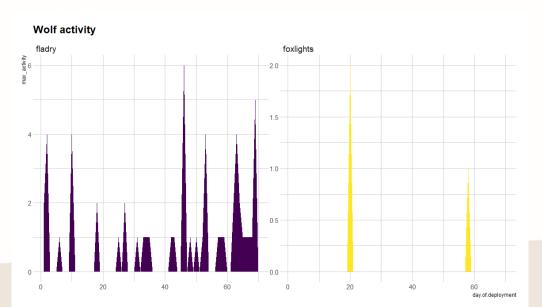




Preliminary assessment of efficiency of fladry and foxlights:





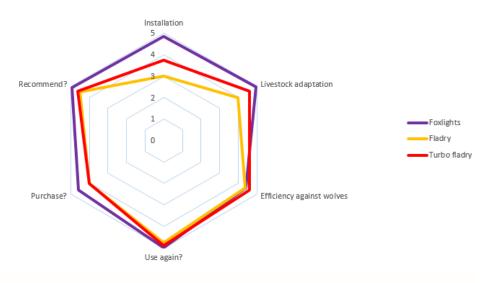




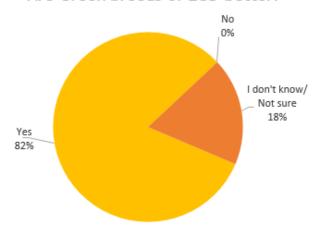


Preliminary assessment of three methods based on questionnaires:

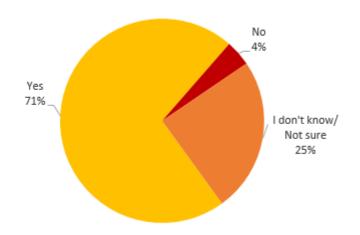
Comparison of methods based on answers to questionnaires



Are Greek breeds of LGD better?



Continue to use?







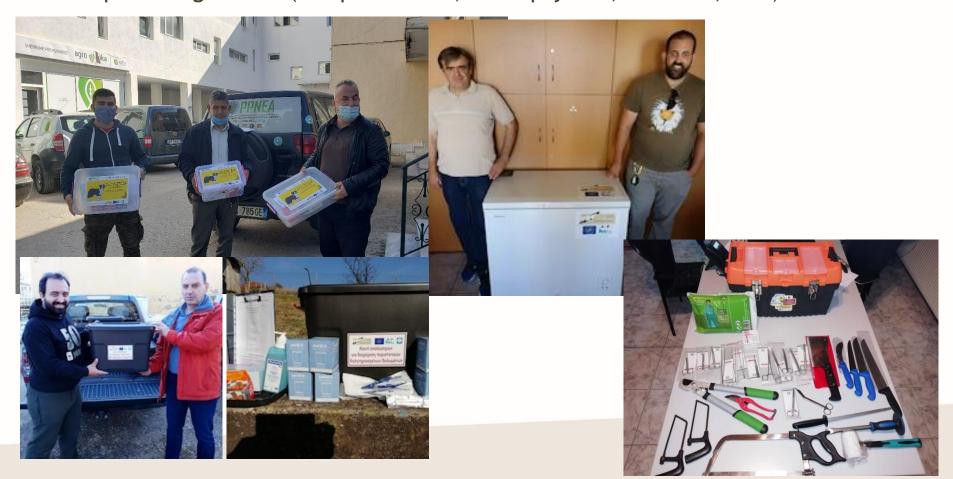
- ✓ Creation of networks of local stakeholders (land users and public bodies) against poison → Informed stakeholders are our best allies who can play an active role in the fight against poison!
 - Distribution of materials and provision of services that help them in their everyday working life (electric fences, binoculars, antipoison first aid kits, vet care for sheepdogs)







- ✓ Creation of networks of local stakeholders (land users and public bodies) against poison → Informed stakeholders are our best allies who can play an active role in the fight against poison!
 - Distribution of tools among relevant authorities to help them manage poisoning events (antipoison kits, necropsy kits, freezers, GPS)



Capacity building actions → Knowledge, prevention & deterrence, prosecution





- ✓ Informative & training seminars on poison bait management for law enforcement officers
 - Essential to have staff members of the Forestry Services, Police and Game Guards properly trained in the issue and management of wildlife poisoning.



Advocacy & policy actions \rightarrow *Knowledge*, prevention & deterrence, prosecution











За разследване на случаи на отравяне в дивата природа и прилагане на оперативен протокол за събиране на доказателства

Българско дружество за защита на птиците **37.** Природозащитна поредица на БДЗП, **книга 37.**

Ръководството е предназначено за употреба от разследващите органи в Република България. За целта на настоящото ръководство ще се фокусираме върху оперативното разследване на местопрестъплението и правилното снемане на доказателства и събиране на пробите.

Обследване на местопрестыплението и снемане на доказателства

а. Ограничаване на периметъра на местопрестъплението



Обозначаване на доказателствата



f. Вертикално обследване на местопрестыплението – Когато помощна линия е начертана напречно на елемент или терен, за да се покажат разлики във височините, които са необходими при всеки тип проучване.



д. Ключове на събраните доказателства

илюстрация	номер	описэние
	1	Отпечатък от обувка
101-1	2	Материал от диви животни
	3	Биологичен материал
The state of the s	4	Оръжие/предмет
5	5	Частичен отпечатых

Capacity building actions → Knowledge & prosecution





✓ Informative & training seminars on carrying out a necropsy in cases of poisoning for vets





Capacity building actions → Knowledge, prevention & deterrence, prosecution





✓ Meetings









Environmental activities at schools and local communities

✓ Active involvement of kids in the fight against poison. The message "travels"

back" to the parents







- Environmental activities at schools and local communities
 - Creation of an environmental education kit focusing on wildlife poisoning.













- Environmental activities at schools and local communities
 - ✓ Events for kids (theatres, excursions, puppets, etc)









- Production of printed and audiovisual material informing about the impact of the use of poison baits
- ✓ Media work (TV, web, SoMe) & organizations of events for local communities



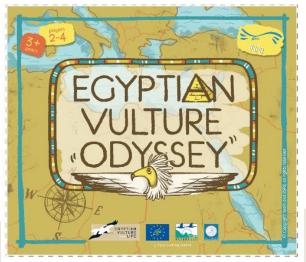




- Production of printed and audiovisual material informing about the impact of the use of poison baits
- ✓ Media work (TV, web, SoMe) & organizations of events for local communities







Challenges for antipoison work in the Balkans





- (E) Not considered as an important environmental crime Until recently, lack of political will and commitment, but this seems to be changing.
- E Low level of law enforcement.
- Significantly understaffed competent authorities with limited resources.
- E Lack of general infrastructure & expertise: protocols, specialized law enforcement officers, toxicological laboratories etc.

Challenges for antipoison work in the Balkans





- E Low awareness and involvement of local communities.
- E Low criminal and administrative penalties (e.g 200 euros and 4 months suspended prison sentence for shepherd using poison baits in one case in Greece).
- Almost zero cases reach the court.

Next steps





- ✓ Continue with training of relevant authorities to increase law enforcement & ensure cases reach the courts.
- Changes in law to stiffen and increase criminal and administrative penalties.
- ✓ Increase public awareness and reduce tolerance to poison baits among local communities.

On a brighter side...















Thank you for your attention!

www.lifeneophron.eu































