



Methodology and role of the supplementary feeding stations in Bulgaria

Volen ARKUMAREV
Vladimir DOBREV

Egyptian Vulture population in the Balkans



58 occupied territories in 2022 in 5 countries



Natural food availability



- ✓ In the Eastern Rhodopes over 300,000 cattle, sheep, and goats are raised
- ✓ The main livestock husbandry practice is extensive grazing or semi-intensive grazing, where livestock graze outside for most of the year.
- ✓ Livestock dies in hardly accessible areas and carcasses remain uncollected
- ✓ However, the number of livestock is gradually decreasing



Why supplementary feeding is needed?



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Aims of the supplementary feeding of Egyptian Vultures:

- ✓ Provide safe food for the species and reduce the risk of poisoning
- ✓ Attract non-breeding individuals and create congregations at safe places
- ✓ Reduce competition with other scavengers
- ✓ Increase breeding success
- ✓ Keep the released captive-bred individuals near the release site and in safe areas



Network of SFS supporting EVs in the Balkans



The network covers more than 50% of the EV population on the Balkans

- ✓ Central feeding stations (2) – 1 in Bulgaria and 1 in Greece
- ✓ Light feeding stations (13) – 4 in Bulgaria, 4 in Greece, 2 in North Macedonia and 3 in Albania
- ✓ Supplementary feedings of individual pairs – Bulgaria

Livestock carcasses cannot be left uncollected in the landscape (the EU Regulation 142/2011 is not applied in Bulgaria). All carcasses must be burnt in incinerators or disposed at registered SFS



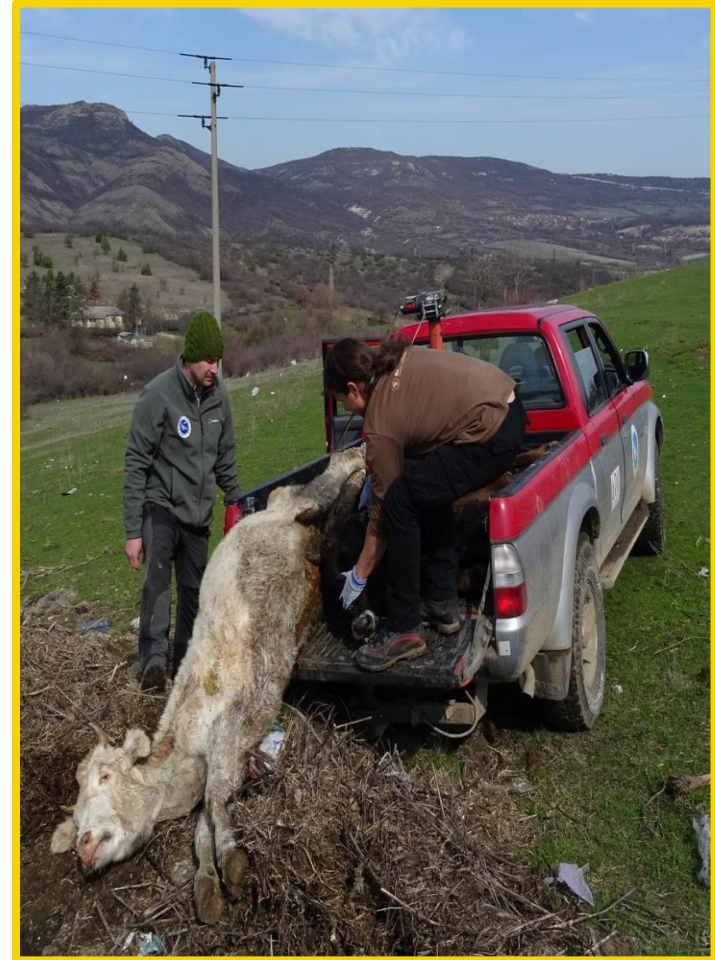
Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Central Feeding stations

- ✓ Supplied with food at least once per week (up to 7 times a week) all year round
- ✓ At least 300 kg at one feeding
- ✓ Food provided: livestock carcasses or offal from a slaughter house
- ✓ 20,000 kg of food yearly provided in Bulgaria



Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

- ✓ The feeding site is visited by up to 44 different Egyptian Vultures from nearby breeding pairs and nonbreeding individuals
- ✓ Important congregation site holding at least 20 immature and non-breeding Egyptian Vultures annually
- ✓ Intensively used by all captive-bred EVs released in the area
- ✓ Individual identification based on face markings
- ✓ Trapping and tagging of EVs at the feeding station



Congregation of EVs



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874



Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Light feeding stations

Site selection criteria:

- ✓ Sites along the flyway of the species (based on GPS tracking data)
- ✓ Sites where immatures and floaters visit frequently (based on GPS tracking data)
- ✓ Sites near several breeding pairs

The identified locations were tested by trial feedings



Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Light feeding stations

- ✓ Weekly provided with 50-100 kg of food in the period March – September
- ✓ Monitoring through photo traps, live cameras and visual observations.
- ✓ All LFS were used by Egyptian Vultures with different frequency.
- ✓ Sustainability guaranteed as the LFS will be supplied by local farmers or for local business purposes e.g. wildlife photography



Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Individual feeding of pairs

- ✓ Regular provision of 1-5 kg of fresh food near breeding pairs – once per week in the beginning and twice per week after hatching
- ✓ Variety of food items provided
- ✓ Provision starts in April and ends in September
- ✓ Food placed 500 m from the nest to avoid disturbance and always at the same location
- ✓ Visual observations to detect the acquisition of the food by the EVs



Methodology and results



LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874

Individual feeding of pairs

- ✓ 6 pairs supported in North Bulgaria and 3 pairs in the Eastern Rhodopes
- ✓ On average 66 kg of food provided per pair annually
- ✓ The 9 pairs did 32 breeding attempts for the period and hatched 38 chicks in total of which 35 successfully left the nests.
- ✓ In most of the cases the pairs consumed or took away the food immediately.



**Thank you for
your attention!**



www.lifeneophron.eu