

## New project to consolidate the return of a threatened vulture species along the Portuguese and Spanish border

Thanks to conservation efforts on the ground, the Cinereous Vulture recolonized Portugal in 2010, nearly four decades following its extinction, and after birds from nearby breeding colonies in Spain started nesting there. But the population is still too small and fragile. Here is where LIFE Aegyptius Return, a new EU-funded LIFE project, comes to secure its comeback.

*"There are now 4 breeding colonies, totalling approximately 40 pairs in Portugal, and most of those were established through westward expansions of breeding colonies on the Spanish side. This natural recolonization can be strengthened and accelerated - this is exactly what we will be doing!"* states Jose Tavares, the Director of the [Vulture Conservation Foundation](#), the leading project partner.

With a budget of 3.7 million euros, the newly launched LIFE Aegyptius Return project aims to consolidate and accelerate the return of the Cinereous Vulture in Portugal and western Spain by reducing disturbance at colonies, protecting them from forest fires, minimizing the threat of poisoning, improving breeding habitat and food availability, and developing national capacities. The project team will implement targeted conservation actions in ten Natura 2000 sites across almost the entire Spanish-Portuguese border, from Miranda do Douro in the north to Vale do Guadiana in the south.

*"By 2027, we aim to double the Cinereous Vulture breeding population in Portugal to at least 80 pairs in 5 colonies and downgrade the national status of the species from Critically Endangered to Endangered,"* states Milene Matos, the Project Manager.

The success of LIFE Aegyptius Return relies on the extensive collaboration of nine partners and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, which include national conservation authorities, veterinary institutions, enforcement bodies, farmers and hunters, to name a few. The project already got off to a good start, with a productive kick-off meeting and a public presentation in early November that received interest and support from various people and organizations.

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### Photos

You can download and use any of the Cinereous Vulture photos found below. Please credit to © Bruno Berthemey/ Vulture Conservation Foundation.

[Photo 1](#)

[Photo 2](#)

[Photo 3](#)

[Photo 4](#)

### **About the Cinereous Vulture**

The Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) is a magnificent bird with a 3 metres wingspan, which plays a unique and vital role in the ecosystem by feeding on and removing carcasses from the environment, likely preventing the spread of diseases. The individuals only become mature when they reach 4-5 years, and each pair only lays one egg per year. It takes around 9 months from the time the breeding season begins until the young chick fledges the nest and becomes independent. Cinereous Vultures make excellent parents, with pairs sharing their various responsibilities like guarding the nest, providing food and keeping the chick warm.

### **About the partnership of LIFE Aegypius Return**

The LIFE Aegypius Return project is co-financed by the European Union's LIFE Programme and is led by the Vulture Conservation Foundation, an international NGO. The consortium consists of eight Portuguese and Spanish partners: Palombar – Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural, Herdade da Contenda, Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves, Liga para a Protecção da Natureza, Associação Transumância e Natureza, Fundación Naturaleza y Hombre, Guarda Nacional Republicana e Associação Nacional de Proprietários Rurais Gestão Cinegética e Biodiversidade.

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