



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, 13 June 2023**

## **Fatal encounter: Wind turbine collision kills rare visiting bird species in the Netherlands**

### *Vagrant Bearded Vulture becomes second victim of wind turbine fatality in the Netherlands and across Europe*

Last Saturday, the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) discovered the remains of Roc, a Bearded Vulture, under a wind turbine in the Netherlands. Roc, a young captive-bred vulture released as part of the LIFE GypConnect reintroduction project in the Grands Causses (Southern France), had ventured to northern Europe as many young Bearded Vultures do in their second year. Tragically, Roc's life came to an abrupt end after colliding with a wind turbine in Zeewolde, the Netherlands. This incident marks the second known case of a Bearded Vulture fatality caused by a wind turbine in the Netherlands and across Europe.

Bearded Vultures typically inhabit secluded mountain-top habitats with relatively few or no wind farms. However, as their population and range expand, instances of vagrancy have increased, thereby raising the potential for accidents like this. Every year, several Bearded Vultures, typically in their second or third year, venture north from their mountain ranges, reaching the lowlands of northern Europe, including northern France, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden. Bearded Vultures are classified as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List, with a history of near disappearance in Europe in the 1970s. Although recovery efforts and reintroduction projects have improved their situation in Europe, the species is still nationally classified as Endangered or Critically Endangered in most European countries. Any loss is significant for this species, especially considering the substantial resources, investment, and time required for its recovery.

Roc's release and subsequent movements were part of an intensive conservation effort led by multiple stakeholders to reintroduce the Bearded Vulture in the Massif Central and Pre-Alps. The ultimate goal is to connect the populations of this species in the Alps and Pyrenees. After being hatched in Ostrava Zoo (Czech Republic) and released in the Grands Causses nearly a year ago, Roc spent the winter in the Alps. This spring, he embarked on a tour across France, even visiting the Paris area, before returning to the Alps. In late May, Roc started moving again, eventually reaching Bremerhaven in Germany, near the Wadden Sea. He then flew south, crossing the Dutch border on 9 June. After exploring the northern part of the Netherlands, he roosted in a tree near Lelystad on Friday evening.

Tragically, Roc's journey ended the next morning when he collided with a wind turbine blade, likely resulting in immediate death. The VCF had been closely monitoring Roc's movements using GPS data, which allowed researchers to track his progress. Hans Pohlmann, the president of the VCF management board, personally visited Roc at his roost the night before the collision.

This incident is the second documented case of a Bearded Vulture fatality caused by a wind turbine in Europe. Another released bird, Bearded Vulture Angele, met a similar fate in Noord-Holland, Netherlands, in 2021. With the increasing populations and the significant increase in wind farms in several places where Bearded Vultures now occur, such as the



vital corridor between the Alps and the Pyrenees in southern France, this number might grow in future years.

The VCF and its partners actively engage with researchers and energy operators to provide data on Bearded Vulture occurrence. The goal is to prevent wind farms from being established in critical corridors and breeding areas or to explore effective mitigation techniques that minimise collisions, such as automated detection systems triggering temporary shutdowns when birds are detected in flight paths. Flexibility and the development of shutdown-on-demand processes can help prevent such incidents in situations where the Bearded Vulture is a vagrant, as is the case in the Netherlands. Some areas in the country already have such systems in place.

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### **About the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF)**

The Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) is an international NGO committed to the conservation of European vultures. The VCF has extensive experience in captive breeding, reintroduction and restocking of vultures, and protection and conservation of vultures in their natural habitats, and is involved in many large-scale vulture conservation projects across Europe, from Iberia to the Alps, and throughout the Balkans to Greece and Cyprus.

Please hyperlink “Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF)” to [www.4vultures.org](http://www.4vultures.org)

### **Download media (Free to use photos, credit indicated must be attributed)**

- [Bearded Vulture Roc found dead under a wind farm in the Netherlands © Hans Pohlmann/ Vulture Conservation Foundation](#)
- [Latest movements of Bearded Vulture Roc © Vulture Conservation Foundation](#)
- [VCF's Hans Pohlman retrieving the carcass of Angèle \(the first Bearded Vulture killed by wind turbine collision in Europe\) © Vulture Conservation Foundation](#)
- [Illustrative Bearded Vulture photo of adult bird in flight carrying a bone © Bruno Berthemey](#)

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