INTERNATIONAL
BEARDED VULTURE
MONITORING

IOD 2024

19th International Bearded Vulture Observation Days

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The IOD 2024 were organised by the following IBM-members[1] and associated organisations[2]:

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PROVINCIA DI SONDRIO [2]

VALLE D'AOSTA[2]

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The International Observation Days (IOD) *are an annual monitoring event for Bearded Vultures organised by the International Bearded Vulture Monitoring network (IBM). The monitoring action takes place in the first two weeks of October with a synchronous and coordinated survey on the focal day and covers large parts of the Alpine arc (since 2006), parts of the Massif Central (since 2012), the eastern part of the French Pyrenees (since 2016), several regions in Spain (since 2017) and some selected sites in Bulgaria (since 2018). The aim of this expanding network is to establish a Europe-wide monitoring of the Bearded Vulture population where time-synchronised observations on the focal day allow to make an approximate estimate of the population size and age class distribution. A monitoring action of this scale and the fact that birds are identified on an individual level whenever possible, is unique and generates baseline information for survival analyses and demographic modelling, which give valuable insight into the reintroduction progress. Furthermore, the number of participants during the IOD increases every year and thus the IOD represents a big public event that helps to increase awareness for the conservation of the Bearded Vulture as a flagship species.*

1 Abstract

On October 12th, during this year's Focal Day, more than 1'400 observers participated in the 19th annual Bearded Vulture census under generally favourable weather conditions. While 26% of observation sites - mainly located on the southern side of the main Alpine ridge and in Spain - experienced poor weather, visibility was reported as good (36%) or moderate (39%) at most sites. Consequently, during the IOD period, a total of 1'162 Bearded Vulture sightings were recorded at 371 of the 858 monitored sites (43%).

In collaboration with 17 IBM partners and several associated organisations, synchronous observations were conducted at 789 sites on the Focal Day, with an additional 69 sites monitored during the extended IOD period. Local experts and monitoring personnel with extensive regional knowledge played a key role in estimating population size and identifying individual birds. By aggregating and analysing these observations across the monitoring region, the age class distribution of the observed population was derived and compared to demographic model predictions (Schaub et al., 2009) at the Alpine scale.

The Alpine Bearded Vulture population was estimated to range between 414 and 547 individuals, slightly below the modelled estimate of 506 individuals. The observed age class distribution closely aligned with model predictions, though subadult birds were slightly underrepresented - likely due to identification challenges in the field. The estimated distribution was as follows: 59% adults, 8% subadults, 15% immature, and 15% juveniles. These estimates were based on observation data from the Focal Day, adjusted to account for unobserved individuals such as territorial birds, fledglings, and GPS-tagged individuals (N = 91 during IOD 2024), among others.

In the Massif Central, the Bearded Vulture population was estimated at 15 to 19 individuals, while in the Aude region of the French Pyrenees approximately 5 to 6 individuals were estimated. Outside the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa in Spain, estimated population sizes included around 7 individuals in the Maestrazgo region and between 34 and 47 in the remaining part of Spain. As in previous years, no Bearded Vultures were observed in Bulgaria, where the species has been considered extinct since 1972.

During this year's IOD, individual-based identification confirmed 97 Bearded Vultures in the Alps, 10 in the Massif Central, and 19 in Spain, with an additional 15 individuals (14 in the Alps and 1 in the Massif Central) identified with lower certainty. In addition, 91 individuals were tracked via GPS, and 36 of these 62 GPS-tagged Bearded Vultures known to be present in the Alpine region were visually confirmed by observers (58%). These individual-based data are of high value for understanding the species' life history and for refining demographic modelling. The availability of such internationally coordinated, individual-based information is unique and provides essential insights into survival rates and long-term population dynamics, thereby supporting progress in Bearded Vulture conservation.

2 Key facts

Monitoring organisation

- 17 IBM-partners and several associated organisations coordinated the IOD 2024
- 1'410 observers participated in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland
- 858 sites were occupied during the IOD period, 789 of them on the focal day (12.10.2024)
- 36% good, 39% moderate and 26% unfavourable weather was reported at the observation sites

Observation results

- 1'162 Bearded Vulture observations were made during the IOD period, 1'103 of them on the focal day
- Bearded Vultures observed at 371 out of 858 sites (43%)
- observed age class distribution (number of observations per age class)
  - adult (N = 671; 64%)
  - subadult (N = 52; 5%)
  - immature (N = 128; 12%)
  - juvenile (N = 128; 12%)
  - unknown (N = 76; 7%)

Age class distribution & populations estimates

- estimated age class distribution in the Alps (individuals)
  - adult (N = 285, 59%)
  - subadult (N = 37, 8%)
  - immature (N = 71, 15%)
  - juvenile (N = 70, 15%)
  - unknown (N = 17, 4%)

- estimated number of Bearded Vulture individuals:
  - Alps: 414-547
  - Massif Central: 15-19
  - Pre-Pyrenees (FRA): 5-6
  - Spain[1]: 34-47
  - Maestrazgo (ESP) ±7
  - Bulgaria: 0

Individual based data

- 97 (Alps), 10 (Massif Central) and 19 (Spain) individuals were identified with certainty
- 15 individuals were probably identified
- GPS-data is available for 91 individuals during the IOD period
- in the Alps 36 (~58%) of the 62 GPS-tagged individuals were identified by the observers

[1] *Only for monitored parts (e.g. no survey in Spanish Pyrenees and other mountain ranges)*

3 Preface

In 2024, over 1’400 participants took part in the International Bearded Vulture Observation Day (IOD) in Europe, which celebrated its 19th consecutive year. Thanks to the dedication of the observers and the coordination of 27 regional coordinators, this extensive monitoring event was carried out across Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. Fortunately, most observers experienced favorable conditions, which helped improve the accuracy of the population estimates collected during the event.

4 Methods

4.1 Organisation

The monitoring is coordinated and executed simultaneously over the four Alpine zones (eastern, central, north-western and southern Alps), in the Massif Central, in parts of the French Pyrenees, Spain and Bulgaria by local IBM-partners and associated organisations (***Figure 1***). This ultimately allows to gain information about Bearded Vulture presence thus reducing the chance of double counts and allowing us to get the big picture of Bearded Vulture distribution.

In 2024, no IOD was organised on Corsica (FRA).

4.2 Time Period

The 2024's international survey was held between the 12th and the 20th October with the focal day on Saturday 12th of October. The buffer period of one week is chosen to allow more flexibility for areas where the weather conditions are not suitable on the focal day.

All dates are decided on mutual agreement among the IBM partners and take into account partner's availability, other ornithological appointments and the birds' reproductive behaviour (see future dates). The fact, that Bearded Vultures are active in nest building during October, makes this a suitable period to observe the birds and record possible new territories and breeding pairs.

4.3 Monitoring Area

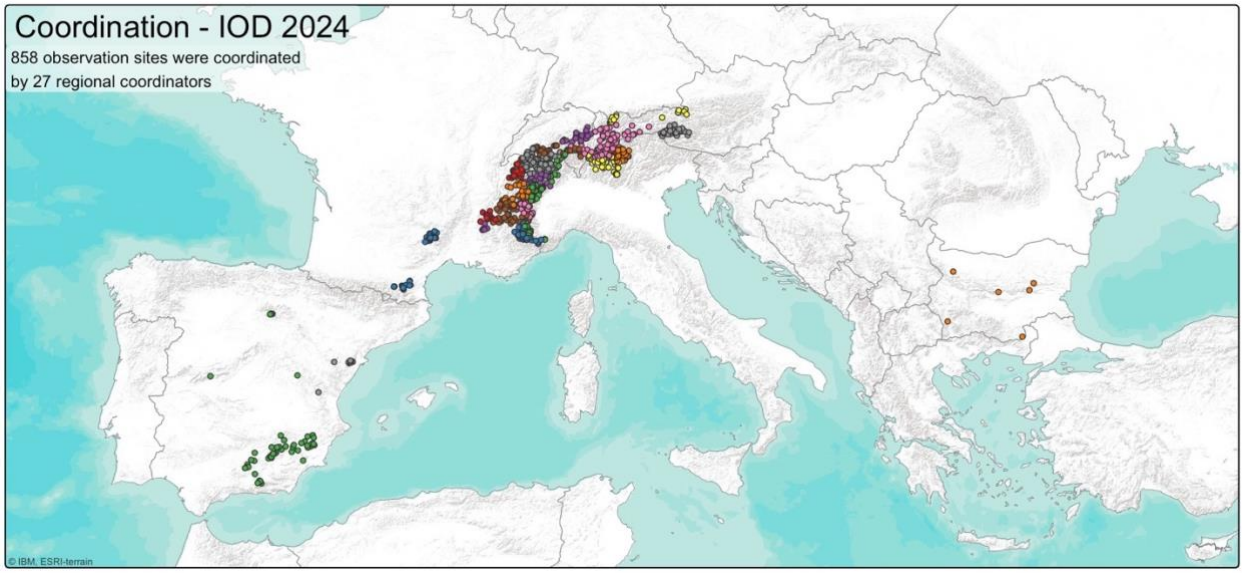

Figure 1. The IOD is regionally coordinated by 27 regional coordinators from 17 full IBM-partners, 7 associated organisations and further collaborators see page 3.

4.4 Data collection and observation protocol

Where weather conditions permitted, posts were occupied between 10:00 and 15:00 at least. The teams were composed of one or more observers, at least one of them being experienced, equipped with binoculars and, depending on availability, telescope and camera. For each observation site and Bearded Vulture sighting the following information was recorded:

Observation site:

- Date and site occupancy (time)
- team/partner and observer names
- site name, address and coordinates
- weather conditions
- total number of observed Bearded Vultures
- presence/observation of other species

Bird observation:

- date
- time and duration of the observation
- age of the bird[2]
- bird name / hypothesis
- picture if possible

[2] *In age classes: juvenile (1.cy), immature (2.-3.cy), subadult (4.-5.cy) adult (≥6.cy)*

4.5 Data Analysis

All data is collected at the end of the day by the local coordinators who will review the reported observations. The local coordinators work in close cooperation with field assistants/observers and other nearby local coordinators responsible for the surrounding monitoring areas. Based on e.g. individual markings, temporal overlap of the sightings, knowledge about known territorial birds and their juveniles that still remain in the area, they are able to critically assess the number of observations and judge to how many individual Bearded Vultures the IOD observations refer to. GPS-tagged birds that were not observed, are added to the estimate and also serve as a measure for detection probability.

The population size estimate should be based only on data from the focal day in order to avoid, that individuals are observed and thus counted twice at two different days. Since individual identification is challenging, it is thus not always possible to assess whether several observations have been made of the same individual. Therefore, the final estimate includes a minimal and a maximal count number, namely accounting for a stricter versus a less conservative analysis.

After a critical assessment of possible double counting, these results are summarised over the whole monitoring area in order to get an overview of the estimated Bearded Vulture population size. Finally, the resulting population estimates of the IOD are compared with the estimates deduced from the demographic model of Schaub et al. (2009).

4.6 Age classification

Per definition the IBM always uses calendar years (cy) for age specifications (***Table 1***).

Table 1. IBM-standard age classification.

Entry in the IBM (life stage)	Calendar year (cy)	Real age (years) Jan-Feb | Mar-Dec		Life history event
juvenile (1. year)	1	-	0	*fledge*
immature (2. year)	2	0	1	*non-territorial*
immature (3. year)	3	1	2	*non-territorial*
subadult (4. year)	4	2	3	*non-territorial*
subadult (5. / 6. year)	5	3	4	*potential nesting*
adult (≥ 6. year)	6	4	5	*potential breeding*
adult (≥ 6. year)	≥7	5	≥6	*potential breeding*

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Weather conditions

The overall weather situation was favourable in 2024 with 36% good, 39% moderate and 26% bad weather conditions at the observation sites (***Figure 2***). In comparison, in 2023 76% of the sites reported favourable weather. Unfavourable weather conditions decrease the probability of birds flying and also the detection probability. It is therefore important to consider weather conditions for the interpretation of the population estimates.

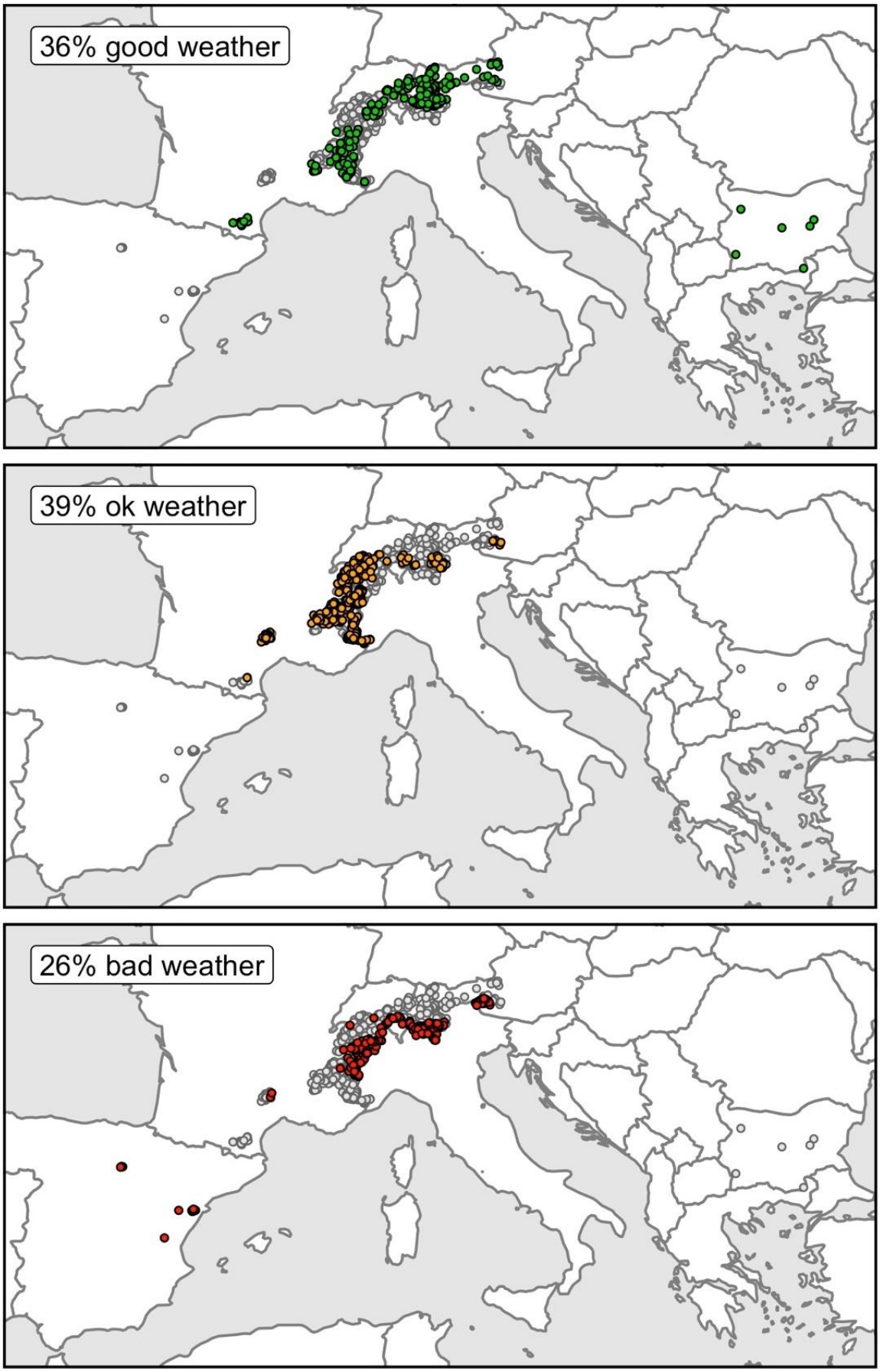

Figure 2. Weather conditions at the observation sites reported by the observers in the field during the IOD 2024. Most of the observers (75%) profited from good or moderate weather conditions while at the southern side of the Alpine range and in Spain some sites faced bad weather conditions (26%).

5.2 Observation data

In 2024, a total of 1'410 observers have occupied 858 observation sites in the Alps, in the French Pyrenees (department Aude), parts of Spain and Bulgaria *(**Figure 3** and **Table 2**).*

As in previous years, the monitoring effort was highest in the western Alpine range. The IBM monitoring network is extending its reach towards the Spanish border near the Pyrenees, aiming to cover areas that could facilitate the connection between Bearded Vulture populations in the Alps and the Pyrenees. Given the known movement patterns of Bearded Vultures in Spain between the southern mountainous regions and the northern areas of Castilla y Léon, Castilla-La Mancha, and La Rioja, observation networks in these regions have been expanded.

In Eastern Europe, observation sites in Bulgaria were occupied for the first time in 2018, despite the absence of Bearded Vultures in this region thus far. Nevertheless, Bearded Vulture releases in Bulgaria planned for 2025 underscore the importance of establishing an observer network. Additionally, this reintroduction site is envisioned to serve as a crucial link between the Alpine population and the Bearded Vulture populations in Greece and Turkey in the future.

No observers were present on Corsica (FRA).

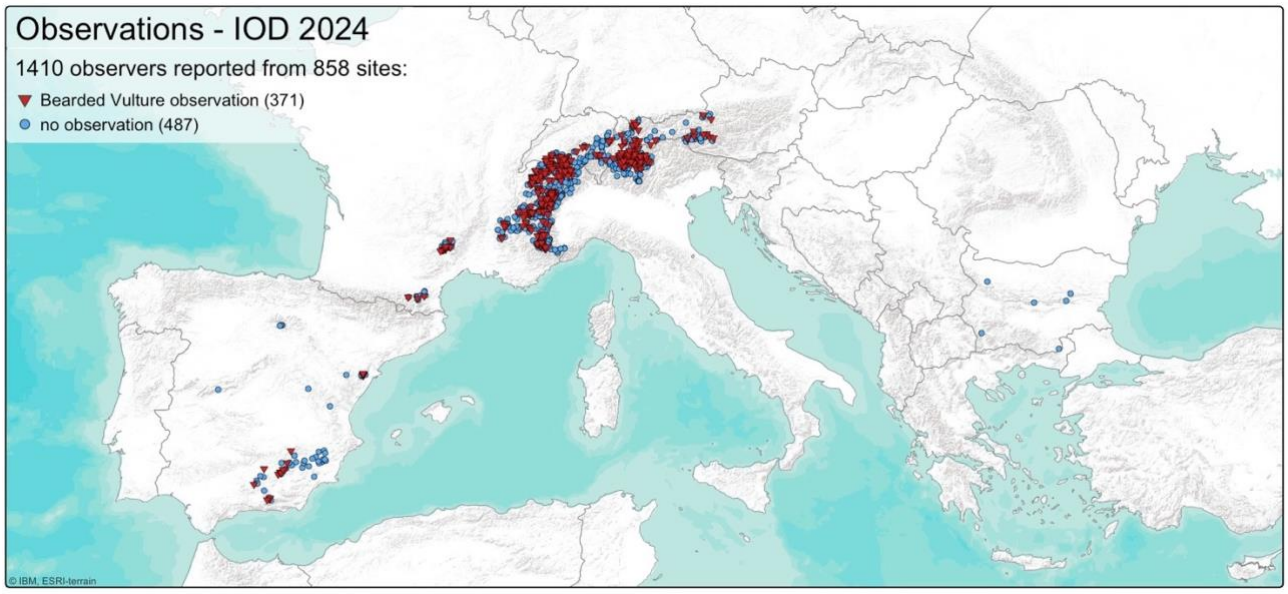

Figure 3. Distribution of all 858 observation sites during the IOD 2024 in Europe. Red triangles depict sites where Bearded Vultures have been observed at least once during the IOD period 12th-20th of October 2024 (N=371) while no observations have been reported from sites marked with a blue dot (N=487).

Table 2. Number of observation sites per region during the IOD.

Zone	Country	Region	occupied sites in October 2024								Total
			12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	
Alpine range			**736**	**3**	**1**	**6**	**4**	**4**		**4**	**758**
East	AUT	Kärnten	4								4
	AUT	Salzburg	10								10
	AUT	Tirol	24								24
	DEU	Bayern	2								2
Central	AUT	Tirol	10								10
	AUT	Vorarlberg	6								6
	CHE	Central Switzerland	22								22
	CHE	Grisons	79								79
	CHE	Ticino	12								12
	CHE	Bern & Wallis	4			1					5
	DEU	Bayern	11								11
	ITA	Lombardia	96								96
	ITA	Piemonte	10								10
	ITA	Trentino-Alto Adige	23								23
North-West	CHE	Bern & Wallis	76	3	1	5	3	4		4	96
	FRA	Rhône-Alpes	83				1				84
	ITA	Piemonte	49								49
	ITA	Valle d'Aosta	43								43
South-West	FRA	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	93								93
	FRA	Rhône-Alpes	33								33
	ITA	Piemonte	46								46
Massif Central			**22**								**22**
	FRA	Languedoc-Roussillon	12								12
	FRA	Midi-Pyrénées	10								10
Pre-Pyrenees			**12**								**12**
	FRA	Languedoc-Roussillon	12								12
Spain			**13**							**47**	**60**
	ESP	Andalucía								25	25
	ESP	Aragón	1								1
	ESP	Castilla y León								1	1
	ESP	Castilla-La Mancha								5	5
	ESP	Comunidad Valenciana	9								9
	ESP	La Rioja	3								3
	ESP	Región de Murcia								16	16
Bulgaria			**6**								**6**
	BGR	Blagoevgrad	1								1
	BGR	Haskovo	1								1
	BGR	Montana	1								1
	BGR	Sliven	2								2
	BGR	Stara Zagora	1								1
Total occupied sites IOD 2024			**789**	**3**	**1**	**6**	**4**	**4**	**0**	**51**	**858**

Table 3. Number of Bearded Vulture sightings for each region during the whole IOD period. 0 values indicate dates where sites were occupied but no Bearded Vulture have been observed.

Zone	Country	Region	occupied sites in October 2024								Total
			12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	
Alpine range			**1'051**	**5**	**1**	**11**	**6**	**5**	**0**	**7**	**1'086**
East	Kärnten	AUT	3								**3**
	Salzburg	AUT	16								**16**
	Tirol	AUT	3								**3**
	Bayern	DEU	2								**2**
Central	Tirol	AUT	16								**16**
	Vorarlberg	AUT	1								**1**
	Central Switzerland	CHE	26								**26**
	Grisons	CHE	107								**107**
	Ticino	CHE	5								**5**
	Bern & Wallis	CHE	0			1					**1**
	Bayern	DEU	8								**8**
	Lombardia	ITA	257								**257**
	Piemonte	ITA	0								**0**
	Trentino-Alto Adige	ITA	43								**43**
North-West	Bern & Wallis	CHE	134	5	1	10	4	5		7	**166**
	Rhône-Alpes	FRA	219				2				**221**
	Piemonte	ITA	29								**29**
	Valle d'Aosta	ITA	37								**37**
South-West	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	FRA	83								**83**
	Rhône-Alpes	FRA	38								**38**
	Piemonte	ITA	24								**24**
Massif Central			**42**								**42**
	Languedoc-Roussillon	FRA	26								**26**
	Midi-Pyrénées	FRA	16								**16**
Pre-Pyrenees			**5**								**5**
	Languedoc-Roussillon	FRA	5								**5**
Spain			**5**							**24**	**29**
	Andalucía	ESP								23	**23**
	Aragón	ESP	0								**0**
	Castilla y León	ESP								0	**0**
	Castilla-La Mancha	ESP								1	**1**
	Comunidad Valenciana	ESP	5								**5**
	La Rioja	ESP	0								**0**
	Región de Murcia	ESP								0	**0**
Bulgaria			**0**								**0**
	Blagoevgrad	BGR	0								**0**
	Haskovo	BGR	0								**0**
	Montana	BGR	0								**0**
	Sliven	BGR	0								**0**
	Stara Zagora	BGR	0								**0**
Total Bearded Vulture observations IOD 2024			**1'103**	**5**	**1**	**11**	**6**	**5**	**0**	**31**	**1'162**

5.3 Telemetry data

5.3.1 IBM-monitoring area

During the IOD period GPS-data of 91 Bearded Vultures with satellite tags has been collected in the Alpine range, the Massif Central, the Pyrenees, north-eastern Spain and Corsica[3] (***Figure 4***). The GPS data is used as important information which is independent of observers about position, movement and monitoring gaps. Some of these birds still show their individual marking patterns (bleached feathers) and can therefore be identified by observers. Exceptions are the wild-hatched birds which have been GPS-tagged but not marked by bleaching their feathers.

GPS-data can serve as an indicator to assess the risk of double counting of individuals. The wide range movement patterns of some birds (***Figure 4***) underline the importance of using only observational data from a narrow period (focal day) for population size estimation to avoid double counting.

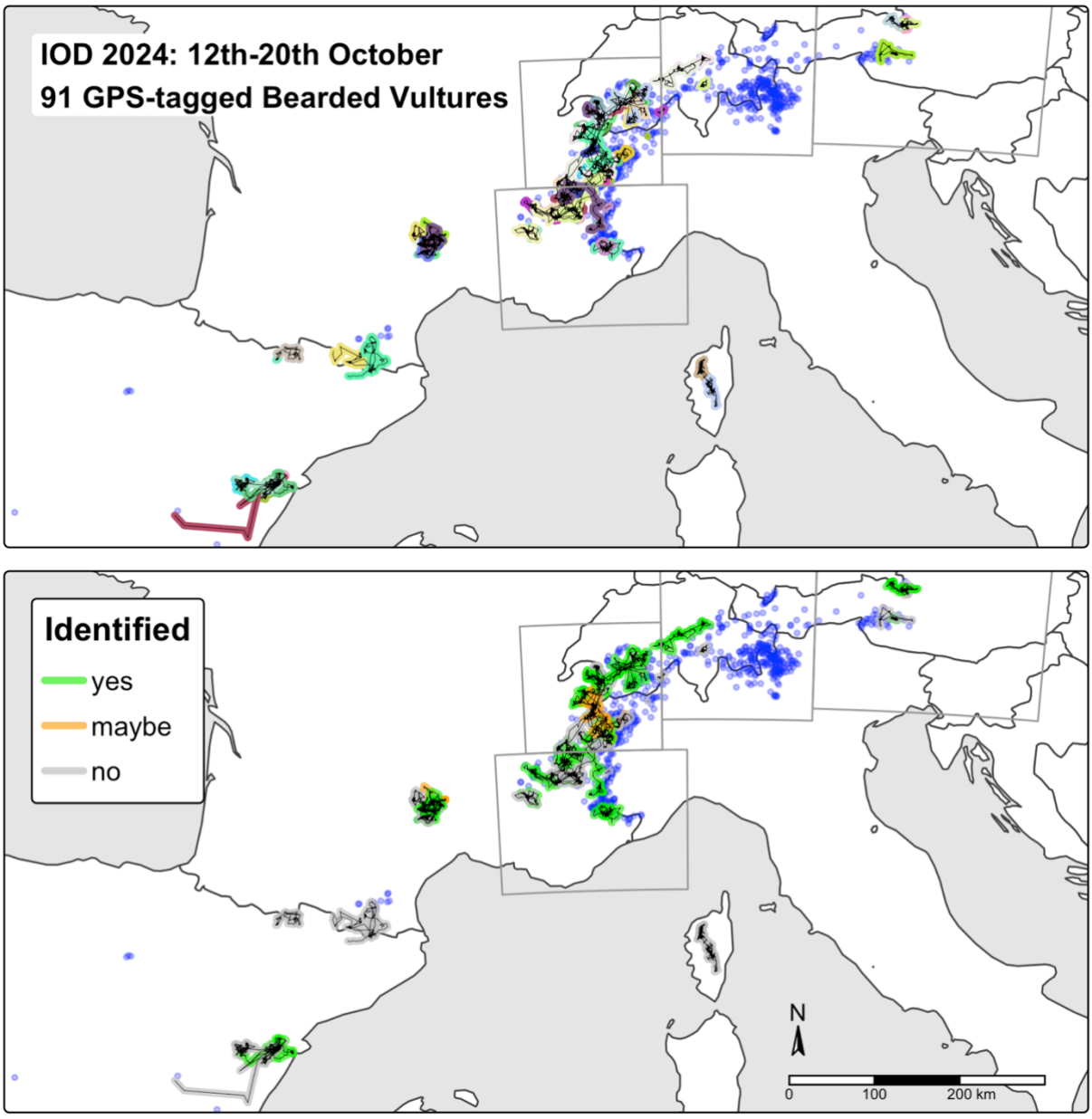

Figure 4. 91 GPS-tagged Bearded Vultures during the IOD period. Blue dots = occupied observation sites.

[3] *No IOD was organized on Corsica in 2024.*

5.3.2 Alpine range

During this year's IOD, GPS-data in the Alpine range was available from 62 GPS-tagged birds during the IOD period and on the focal day (12.10.2024). Out of the 62 GPS-tagged birds 36 individuals could be sighted and identified, while 4 birds were identified with some uncertainty by observers. In summary, 58% of the GPS-tagged birds have been sighted and identified, which is considerably more compared to 2023 (21%).

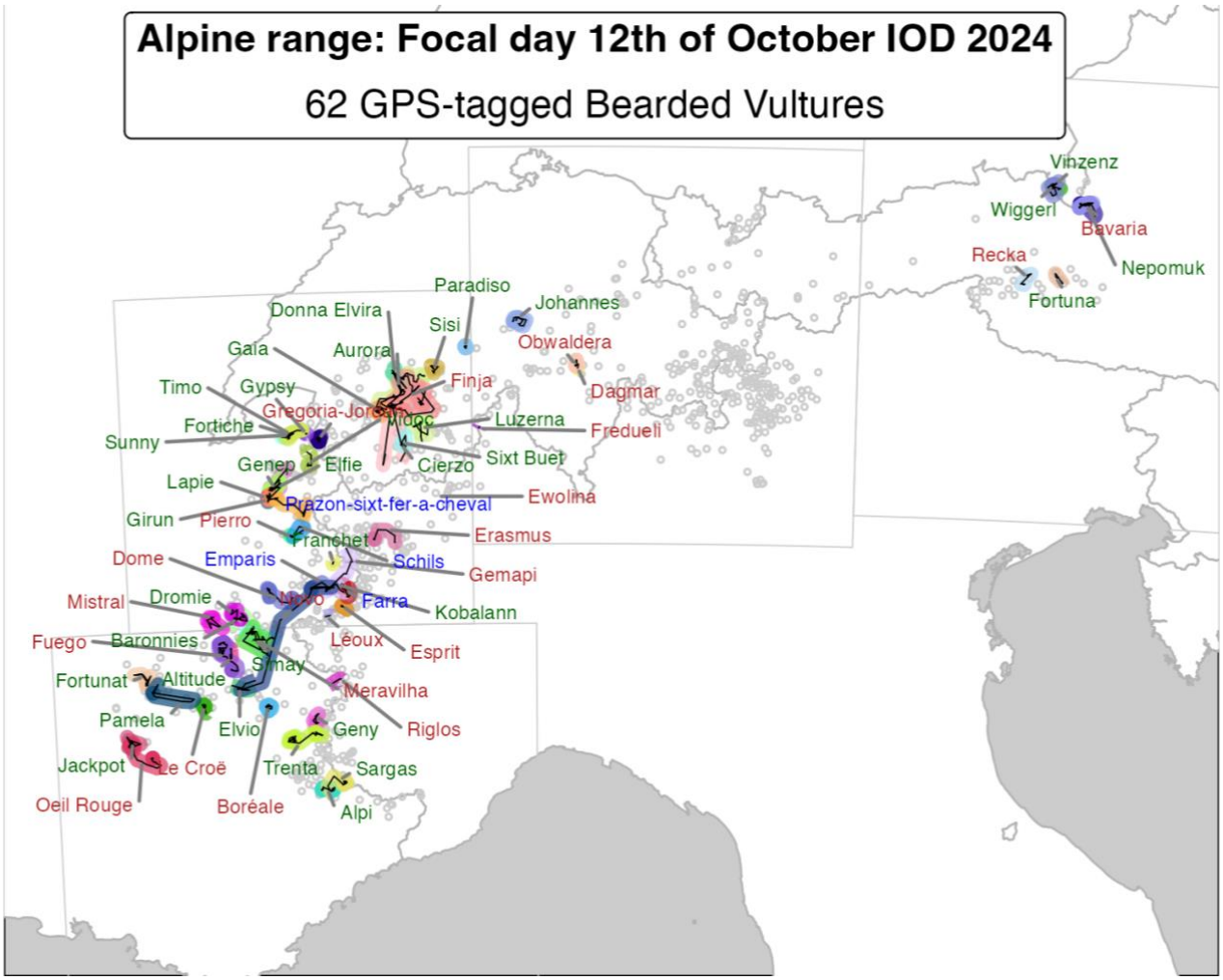

Figure 5. Positions of 62 Bearded Vultures tagged with GPS transmitters that were present in the Alpine range during the focal day (12.10.2024). Observation sites that were occupied during the IOD period are marked with grey circles. During the IOD period 36 birds have been identified (green labels), 4 birds have been probably identified (blue labels) and 22 birds couldn't be observed or identified (red labels).

Table 4. 91 birds, 35 males and 45 females, with active GPS-tag during the IOD period in all regions. No IOD was organised in Corsica. 46 of the GPS-tagged individuals have been identified and 5 were probably identified during the IOD. The tables are arranged based on the region the birds used during the IOD 2024.

Animal	BirdID	Sex (m/f)	Age class	Hatch	Days with pos.	Pos. on focal day	Observed (yes/maybe/no)
Alpine range	**63**	**26/25**					**37/4/22**
Altitude	W0313	f		2019	9	6	yes
Cierzo	BG0899	m		2016	7	6	yes
Elvio	BG1026	m		2019	9	5	yes
Fortuna	BG0843	m		2015	9	5	yes
Girun	BG0904	f		2016	8	5	yes
Gypsy	W0209	m		2017	9	8	yes
Johannes	BG0964	m		2017	9	58	yes
Lapie	W0251	m		2018	9	11	yes
Pamela	BG1031	f		2019	9	13	yes
Roman	BG0854	m		2015	1	0	yes
Simay	BG0983	m	adult	2018	9	10	yes
Sixt Buet	W0285	f		2019	9	7	yes
Emparis	W0284	f		2019	9	13	maybe
Schils	BG0802	m		2014	9	5	maybe
Ewolina	BG0838	f		2015	5	1	no
Finja	BG1003	f		2018	9	67	no
Fredueli	BG1001	m		2018	8	2	no
Gemapi	W0196	f		2016	9	2	no
Léoux	BG0950	f		2017	9	5	no
Mistral	BG1022	m		2019	9	12	no
Pierro	W0301	m		2019	9	12	no
Donna Elvira	BG1117	f		2021	9	14	yes
Fortunat	BG1068	m		2020	9	36	yes
Kobalann	BG1063	f		2020	9	13	yes
Luzerna	BG1071	f		2020	9	51	yes
Sunny	W0397	m	subadult	2021	9	50	yes
Vidoc	W0356	f		2020	9	12	yes
Prazon-sixt-fer-a-cheval	W0346	u		2020	9	26	maybe
Bavaria	BG1112	f		2021	9	69	no
Gregoria-Jordan	W0367	u		2020	9	67	no
Novo	BG1098	m		2021	9	12	no
Baronnies	BG1163	f		2023	9	65	yes
Dromie	BG1162	m		2023	9	20	yes
Elfie	W0437	f		2022	9	14	yes
Jackpot	BG1175	m		2023	9	69	yes
Nepomuk	BG1178	m		2023	9	67	yes
Sargas	BG1161	m		2023	9	67	yes
Sisi	BG1171	f		2023	9	15	yes
Trenta	W0512	f	immature	2023	9	48	yes
Dagmar	BG1145	f		2022	9	7	no
Dome	W0478	u		2022	9	46	no
Erasmus	W0549	u		2023	9	15	no
Esprit	W0545	u		2023	9	70	no
Le Croë	BG1169	m		2023	9	70	no
Obwaldera	BG1185	m		2023	9	47	no
Recka	BG1147	f		2022	9	14	no
Riglos	BG1138	m		2022	1	5	no
Alpi	W0581	u		2024	9	136	yes
Aurora	BG1234	f		2024	9	136	yes
Fortiche	W0630	u		2024	9	66	yes
Franchet	W0631	u		2024	9	6	yes
Gaia	BG1212	f		2024	9	117	yes
Genep	W0609	u		2024	9	45	yes
Geny	W0617	u		2024	9	16	yes
Paradiso	BG1213	m	juvenile	2024	9	70	yes
Timo	W0615	u		2024	9	67	yes
Vinzenz	BG1227	m		2024	9	13	yes
Wiggerl	BG1240	m		2024	9	46	yes
Farra	W0634	u		2024	9	134	maybe
Boréale	BG1229	f		2024	9	70	no
Fuego	BG1221	f		2024	9	137	no
Meravilha	BG1201	f		2024	9	133	no
Oeil Rouge	BG1198	m		2024	9	72	no

...

Animal	BirdID	Sex (m/f)	Age class	Hatch	Days with pos.	Pos. on focal day	Observed (yes/maybe/no)
Massif Central	**12**	**4/8**					**7/1/4**
Layrou	BG0761	m	adult	2013	7	0	yes
Cévennes	BG1032	m		2019	9	36	no
Aven	BG1067	f	subadult	2020	9	15	yes
Fario	BG1079	f		2020	9	108	yes
Ophrys	BG1078	f		2020	9	64	yes
Peyre	BG1116	m		2021	9	16	yes
Pyrenees	BG1094	f		2021	9	71	maybe
Rei del Causse	BG1128	m	immature	2022	9	137	no
Serapias	BG1164	f		2023	9	66	no
Terre	BG1202	f	juvenile	2024	9	136	yes
Tornade	BG1207	f		2024	9	138	yes
Tarn	BG1238	f		2024	9	49	no
Spain (without Pyrenees)	**8**	**2/6**					**2/0/6**
Bassi	BG1033	m	adult	2019	9	49	yes
Amic	BG0995	m		2018	9	13	no
Dalila	BG1109	f	subadult	2021	9	130	no
Dena	BG1104	f		2021	9	21	no
Farigola	BG1172	f	immature	2023	9	287	no
Genista	BG1225	f	juvenile	2024	9	168	yes
Gea	BG1214	f		2024	9	6	no
Guaita	BG1215	f		2024	8	0	no
Corsica	**4**	**2/2**					**0/0/4**
Cintu	BG1042	m	adult	2019	9	38	no
Sulana	BG1144	m	immature	2022	9	57	no
Culomba	BG1233	f	juvenile	2024	9	69	no
Piuma	BG1239	f		2024	9	57	no
Pyrenees	**4**	**1/3**					**0/0/4**
Alos	BG0992	m	adult	2018	9	16	no
Celest	BG1073	f	subadult	2020	9	16	no
Pradines	BG1122	f		2021	9	58	no
Flora	BG1177	f	immature	2023	9	118	no

5.4 Individual-based data

During the IOD 2024 period 130 individuals have been identified with high probability in the Alpine range. 12 of them in the eastern Alps, 27 in the central Alps, 31 in the north-western Alps, 27 in the south-western Alps. Another 10 birds have been identified in the Massif Central and 19 in Spain (***Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7***). Some birds could not be identified with certainty (Alps N = 14, Massif Central N= 1), these are marked as maybe observed. Such individual-based monitoring is only possible due to the international collaboration, information exchange and the coordination of marking patterns within the international Bearded Vulture monitoring network.

*Table 5. 39 Bearded Vultures that were identified (4 of them with some uncertainty = maybe identified) in the eastern and central Alps during the IOD grouped by the region where they have been observed. *No genetic verification for 2024.*

		Bird	Observed (yes / maybe)	BirdID	Sex (m/f)	Hatch	Tag	Territory	Region
Alpine range		**12**	**9 / 3**		**7 / 4**				
		Nepomuk	yes	BG1178	m	2023	GPS		
		Vinzenz	yes	BG1227	m	2024	GPS		Bavaria (DEU)
		Wiggerl	yes	BG1240	m	2024	GPS		
	Eastern	Alexa*	yes	BG0100	f	1988		Gastein/Rauris	
		Andreas Hofer*	yes	BG0260	m	1996		Gastein/Rauris	
		Glocknerlady	maybe	BG0718	f	2012		Gschlöß	
		Pinzgarus	maybe	BG0558	m	2008		Gschlöß	
		Fortuna	yes	BG0843	m	2015	GPS	Heiligenblut	Hohe Tauern NP (AUT)
		Heiligenblut2024	yes	W0596	u	2024		Heiligenblut	
		Ambo*	maybe	BG0392	f	2002		Heiligenblut	
		Charlie*	yes	BG0910	f	2016		Mallnitz	
		Felix2*	yes	BG0793	m	2014		Mallnitz	
		27	**26 / 1**		**9 / 9**				
		Madagaskar*	yes	BG0665	m	2011		Lechtal	
		Natura*	yes	BG0464	f	2005		Lechtal	
		Humboldt-Albula*	yes	W0079	f	2010		Ötztal	Tirol (NP)
		Paolino-Zebru*	yes	W0204	m	2016		Ötztal	
		Ötztal2024	yes	W0622	u	2024		Ötztal	
		Johannes	yes	BG0964	m	2017	GPS		Central Switzerland
		Noel-Leya	yes	BG0797	m	2014			
		Foscagno2024	yes	W0646	u	2024		Foscagno	
		GT0129*	yes		f			Foscagno	
		GT0132*	maybe		m			Foscagno	Province Sondrio & Bergamo (ITA)
		Balmat*	yes	W0141	f	2014		Sondrio	
		Ecureuil-Maloja*	yes	W0184	u	2016		Sondrio	
	Central	Cic*	yes	BG0186	m	1993		Livigno	
		Fopel	yes	W0595	u	2024		Livigno	
		Moische*	yes	BG0146	f	1991		Livigno	
		Jenny-Ofenpass2024	yes	W0607	u	2024		Ofenpass	
		Livigno*	yes	W0008	m	2000		Ofenpass	
		Jo*	yes	BG0169	f	1992		Ortler	
		Sielva	yes	W0629	u	2024		Ortler	Stelvio NP, Trentino & Sondrio (ITA)
		Marco-Rabbi2024	yes	W0626	u	2024		Rabbi	
		Peder	yes	W0628	u	2024		Val Martello	
		Temperatio*	yes	BG0495	f	2006		Val Martello	
		Stift*	yes	BG0393	f	2002		Valle del Braulio	
		Felice*	yes	BG0375	f	2001		Zebru	
		Heinz-Serraglio*	yes	W0045	m	2007		Zebru	
		GT0090*	yes						
		Kilian*	yes	BG0790	m	2014		Reschen-Resia	Vinschgau (ITA)

*Table 6. 58 Bearded Vultures that were identified (10 of them with some uncertainty = maybe identified) in the north- and south-western Alps during the IOD grouped by the region where they have been observed. *No genetic verification for 2024.*

		Bird	Observed (yes / maybe)	BirdID	Sex (m/f)	Hatch	Tag	Territory	Region
Alpine range		**31**	**24 / 7**		**9 / 15**				
		Girun	yes	BG0904	f	2016	GPS	Aravis Sud74	Haute Savoie (FRA)
		Lapie	yes	W0251	m	2018	GPS	Aravis Sud74	
		Gypsy	yes	W0209	m	2017	GPS	Ardoisieres	
		Timo	yes	W0615	u	2024	GPS	Ardoisieres	
		Genep	yes	W0609	u	2024	GPS	Bargy	
		Fortiche	yes	W0630	u	2024	GPS	Bourg-Saint-Maurice-2	
		Elfie	yes	W0437	f	2022	GPS		
		Sunny	yes	W0397	m	2021	GPS		
		Vidoc	yes	W0356	f	2020	GPS		
		Prazon-sixt-fer-a-cheval	maybe	W0346	u	2020	GPS		
	North-western	Junior Ranger	yes	BG0702	f	2012		Andagne	Savoie (FRA)
		Farra	maybe	W0634	u	2024	GPS	Andagne	
		Nonno Bob*	maybe	BG0548	m	2008		Andagne	
		Schils	maybe	BG0802	m	2014	GPS	Bourg-Saint-Maurice-2	
		Termignon2024	yes	W0582	u	2024		Termignon	
		Franchet	yes	W0631	u	2024	GPS	Val dIsère	
		Kobalann	yes	BG1063	f	2020	GPS		
		Emparis	maybe	W0284	f	2019	GPS		
		Pablo	maybe	BG0359	m	2000		Derborence_Vérouet	Wallis und Berner Oberland (CHE)
		Ginko*	yes	W0169	f	2015		Niedergesteln	
		Silvan-Tantermozza*	yes	W0095	f	2011		Saas	
		Cierzo	yes	BG0899	m	2016	GPS	Val d'Hérens	
		Smaragd	yes	BG0675	m	2011		Zermatt	
		Aurora	yes	BG1234	f	2024	GPS		
		Donna Elvira	yes	BG1117	f	2021	GPS		
		Gaia	yes	BG1212	f	2024	GPS		
		Luzerna	yes	BG1071	f	2020	GPS		
		Paradiso	yes	BG1213	m	2024	GPS		
		Sisi	yes	BG1171	f	2023	GPS		
		Sixt Buet	yes	W0285	f	2019	GPS		
		Gildo	maybe	BG0299	f	1998			
		27	**24 / 3**		**14 / 8**				
		Roman	yes	BG0854	m	2015	GPS	Maira	Alpi Marittime (ITA)
		Aries	yes	W0608	u	2024		Usseglio	
		Italia 150*	yes	BG0660	m	2011		Usseglio	
		Jackpot	yes	BG1175	m	2023	GPS		Baronnies (FRA)
		Basalte*	maybe	BG0716	m	2012		Malaval	Haute Dauphiné (FRA)
		Elvio	yes	BG1026	m	2019	GPS	Molines Chp	
		Altitude	yes	W0313	f	2019	GPS		
		Baronnies	yes	BG1163	f	2023	GPS		
		Dromie	yes	BG1162	m	2023	GPS		
		Simay	yes	BG0983	m	2018	GPS		
	South-western	Alpi	yes	W0581	u	2024	GPS	Bonette	Mercantour (FRA)
		Bellemotte	maybe	BG0708	f	2012		Bonette	
		Cassos	yes	W0104	u	2012		Chambeyron-Ubayette	
		Geny	yes	W0617	u	2024	GPS	Chambeyron-Ubayette	
		Rimani	yes	W0093	f	2011		Chambeyron-Ubayette	
		Sereno	yes	BG0348	m	2000		Source de lUbaye	
		Girasole	yes	BG0549	f	2008		Source de la Tinée	
		Rocca*	yes	BG0516	m	2007		Source de la Tinée	
		Tenao	yes	BG0755	m	2013		Val dEntraunes	
		Roche Grande	yes	W0588	u	2024		Val dEntraunes	
		Sargas	yes	BG1161	m	2023	GPS		
		Trenta	yes	W0512	f	2023	GPS		
		Py	maybe	GT0150	m				
		Gerlinde*	yes	BG0759	f	2013		Ambane	Vercors (FRA)
		Stephan*	yes	BG0616	m	2010		Ambane	
		Pamela	yes	BG1031	f	2019	GPS	Archiane	
		Fortunat	yes	BG1068	m	2020	GPS		
		97	**83 / 14**		**39 / 36**				

Table 7. Bearded Vultures that were identified in the Massif Central (10) and Spain (19) (without the Pyrenees) during the IOD.

	Bird	Observed (yes / maybe)	BirdID	Sex (m/f)	Hatch	Tag	Territory	Region
Massif Central	**10**	**9 / 1**		**4 / 6**				
	Aven	yes	BG1067	f	2020	GPS	Dargilan	Massif Central (FRA)
	Calandreto	yes	BG0948	m	2017		Dargilan	
	Adonis	yes	BG0794	m	2014		Jonte amont	
	Layrou	yes	BG0761	m	2013	GPS	Jonte amont	
	Fario	yes	BG1079	f	2020	GPS		
	Ophrys	yes	BG1078	f	2020	GPS		
	Peyre	yes	BG1116	m	2021	GPS		
	Terre	yes	BG1202	f	2024	GPS		
	Tornade	yes	BG1207	f	2024	GPS		
	Pyrenees	maybe	BG1094	f	2021	GPS		
Spain (without Pyrenees)	**19**	**19 / 0**		**7 / 12**				
	Bassi	yes	BG1033	m	2019	GPS		Maestrazgo (ESP)
	Genista	yes	BG1225	f	2024	GPS		
	Stelvio 50	yes	BG1049	m	2019			Andalusia (ESP)
	Amaya	yes	W0566	f	2023			
	Blimunda	yes	BG0633	f	2010			
	Bwindi	yes	BG1053	m	2020			
	Capitel	yes	W0429	f	2021			
	Castrileña	yes	W0640	f	2024			
	Esperanza	yes	W0179	f	2015			
	Grefa	yes	BG1107	f	2021			
	Guadalquivir	yes	BG0751	m	2013			
	Jaca	yes	BG1141	m	2022			
	Miguel	yes	BG0800	m	2014			
	Savuti	yes	W0370	f	2020			
	Suerte Somera	yes	BG0990	f	2018			
	Sulayr	yes	BG1237	f	2024			
	Tiscar	yes	BG1247	f	2024			
	Tono	yes	BG0486	m	2006			
	Tormenta	yes	BG0963	f	2017			

5.5 Estimated number of Bearded Vultures

E_{foc} - Based on observations (focal day):

Although the total amount of observations gathered during the IOD can be used as an indicative of the presence of Bearded Vultures, it is not possible to use data from the whole week (IOD period) due to the high mobility of the species (***Figure 4***). In order to omit the possibility of double counting birds and to create a more accurate picture of the Bearded Vulture distribution, only observations from the focal day were used to determine the approximate number of birds (E_{foc} *= estimate based on observations (focal day)* ***Table 8***). Furthermore, regional administrators were requested to communicate with nearby partners to avoid double counting of bird individuals.

E_{hyp} - Hypothetically present birds:

During the focal day it is not possible to observe and identify every single bird that is known to be present in a specific region. A second estimate (E_{hyp} = *hypothetically present birds*) composed of the estimate based on observations (focal day) E_{foc} and the number of individuals that were missed during the survey but that should be present in the region (e.g. territorial breeding pairs) should therefore give a picture of the expected number of Bearded Vulture individuals on the regional level (***Table 8***).

However, as the number of counted birds during the IOD depends on multiple external factors (weather conditions, observer etc.), these estimates are best used as a proxy for population trends and to be compared between years rather than directly and solely as a population size estimation.

E_{GPS} – GPS-tagged non-territorial floater birds:

Most of the GPS-tagged birds are non-adult floater birds, which do not necessarily stay in a certain area for a longer time period. Therefore, GPS-tagged individuals, which have not been observed during the IOD should be added to the subtotal of hypothetically present birds in order estimate the overall Alpine Bearded Vulture population.

Final estimate:

We estimate the number of Bearded Vultures observed on the focal day in the Alpine range to vary between 340 and 405 individuals (E_{foc}). Together with the birds that are known to be present in the region (mainly territorial birds from the breeding pairs), the estimate sums up to 388 – 517 individuals (E_{hyp}). Based on GPS-data we know, that 62 tagged birds were present in the Alpine range during this year's IOD. 26-30 of these individuals (E_{GPS}) were not identified by observers and should therefore be added to the estimate (E_{hyp}). Through the combination of estimates based on observation data, expert knowledge about territorial birds and GPS-data results it can be assumed that the number of Bearded Vultures in the Alpine population varies between 414 and 547 individuals.

The estimates of hypothetically present birds E_{hyp} represent 82% (conservative) or 108% (optimistic) of the population size that is predicted by the demographic model from Schaub et al. 2009 (predicted population size = 506, **Figure 7** *and* ***Table 10***) with a higher variance than the estimates from the year 2023 (conservative = 316 (69%), optimistic = 419 (91%) with slightly poorer weather conditions). However, looking at the estimates based on observations only, it was possible to observe 67% or 80% respectively of the birds predicted by the model – considerably more than in 2023 (49% to 57%). In good weather conditions (thermals) the activity and flight distance of the birds increase, which can lead to double counting. In addition, it is expected that with good visibility, more observations will be possible.

Table 8. Estimates of minimal (conservative) and the maximal (optimistic) number of Bearded Vulture individuals observed during the focal day (E_{foc}) and hypothetically present (E_{hyp} = observed and known not-observed birds) in each region during the IOD.

Population	Country	Region	E_{foc} - Estimate		E_{hyp} - Estimate	
			min	max	min	max
Alpine range	**East subtotal**		**24**	**25**	**30**	**37**
	AUT	Hohe Tauern NP	10	11	12	17
	AUT	Naturparke Tirol	11	11	15	17
	GER	Bavarian Alps	3	3	3	3
	Central subtotal		**127**	**150**	**140**	**190**
	GER	Allgaeu	2	2	2	2
	CHE	Central Switzerland	4	4	4	4
	CHE	Grisons	66	77	73	102
	CHE	Ticino	4	6	6	10
	ITA	Stelvio NP	34	40	36	42
	ITA	Vinschgau	11	13	11	19
	ITA	Sondrio & Bergamo Region	6	8	8	11
	North-west subtotal		**126**	**159**	**153**	**208**
	CHE	Bern	18	21	20	25
	CHE	Wallis	46	60	49	74
	FRA	Haute Savoie	19	32	25	39
	FRA	Savoie	32	34	34	36
	ITA	Valle d'Aosta & Gran Paradiso NP	11	12	25	34
	South-west subtotal		**63**	**71**	**65**	**82**
	FRA	Baronnies	1	1	1	1
	FRA	Haute Dauphiné	21	25	22	30
	FRA	Mercantour	21	25	21	25
	FRA	Vercors NP	5	5	5	5
	ITA	Alpi Cozie	9	9	10	13
	ITA	Alpi Marittime - WAON	6	6	6	8
Subtotal Alpine range			**340**	**405**	**388**	**517**
+ not observed GPS-tagged birds					26	30
Total Alpine range			**340**	**405**	**414**	**547**
Massif Central	FRA	Grands Causses & Cevennes NP	9	13	9	14
+ not observed GPS-tagged birds					4	5
Total Massif Central					**13**	**19**
French Pyrenees	FRA	Aude	5	5	5	6
+ not observed GPS-tagged birds					-	-
Total French Pyrenees					**5**	**6**
Spain (wihtout Pyrenees)	ESP	Andalusia, La Rioja, Castile y Leòn, Castile la Mancha	18	24	**34**	**47**
Maestrazgo	ESP	Maestrazgo	2	2	**3**	**3**
+ not observed GPS-tagged birds					4	4
Total Maestrazgo					7	7
Bulgaria	BRG		-	-	**-**	**-**

Table 9. Comparison of the estimated number of Bearded Vultures in the Alpine range based on the survey during the IOD in comparison to the estimates from previous years (no estimate from 2020).

	E_{foc} - Estimate based on observations (focal day only)		E_{hyp} - Estimated number of hypothetically present birds	
	min	max	min	max
IOD 2024	**340**	**405**	**414**	**547**
IOD 2023	224	260	316	419
IOD 2022	209	248	288	377
IOD 2021	236	284	284	381
IOD 2020	-	-	-	-
IOD 2019	215	257	256	344
IOD 2018	153	177	208	284
IOD 2017	152	182	208	251
IOD 2016	149	178	172	218
IOD 2015	120	153	166	199
IOD 2014	87	95	112	130
IOD 2013	87	98	117	128

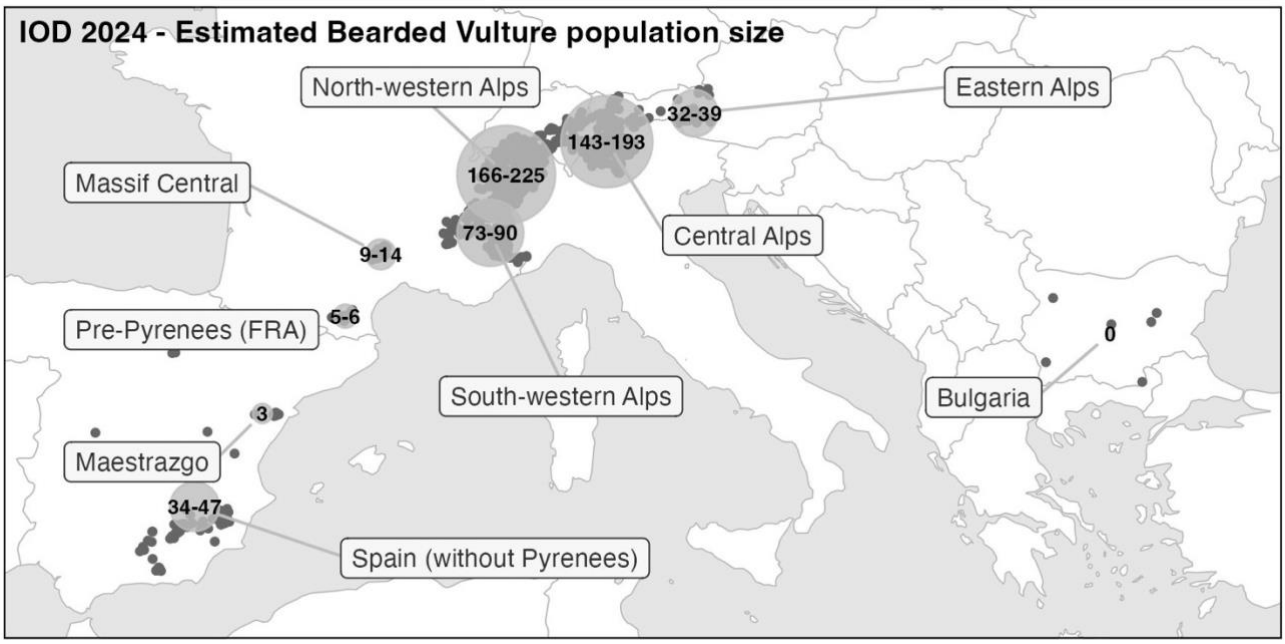

*Figure 6. Overview of the estimated Bearded Vulture population size E_{hyp} on the regional level within the monitoring area of the IOD 2024. Estimates of the populations size are based on estimates derived from observations during the focal day of the IOD E_{foc} and an estimated number of birds that were not observed but should be present in the region (mostly territorial birds). *The estimate for Spain is based on observation data from the occupied observation sites (grey dots) without taking the Bearded Vulture population of the Spanish Pyrenees into account. In Spain Bearded Vultures roam between mountainous areas in the south and in central and northern Spain. No IOD was organised in Corsica (FRA) where a small population of 4 breeding pairs survived. Since 2016 a restocking program is ongoing on Corsica to support this small island population. Since their extinction in 1972, no Bearded Vultures are present in Bulgaria.*

5.6 Proportional distribution of age classes in the Alpine range

By looking at the total number of observations during the IOD it is possible to get an overview of age class distribution, which should be representative of the general Alpine Bearded Vulture population. Per definition the IBM always uses calendar years (cy) for age specifications (***Table 1***).

Comparing the results from the absolute numbers of observations with the estimated number of individuals per age class indicates that, even though there is some variation, observation data can be used as an estimate for the age class distribution. The estimate of the age class distribution based on the data collected during this year's IOD is similar as the last year's estimate. Most of the birds observed on the focal day (E_{foc}) were adults (58%), followed by juveniles (14%), immatures (16%) and subadults (8%). In fact, similarly to last year's results, the proportion of sighted birds aged in their 5th calendar year or older (subadults & adults - potentially in age to establish a territory) almost reaches 2/3 of the total number of observations (***Table 10***).

Finally, the results were compared to the expected number of living individuals per age class derived by the demographic model designed by Schaub et al. (2009) *(**Table 10, Figure 7***). The results from ***Figure 7*** indicate that the percentage of juveniles coincide quite well with the model predictions. However, the proportion of subadults and immatures are underestimated, while the proportion of adults is overestimated by the observations from the IOD.

There are multiple and additive explanations for the observed discrepancies in the age class distribution (A) and total estimate of the population size (B):

A. Adult birds might be easier to recognise, detect and monitor as they settle into a region and are territorial. In addition, many observation sites were situated in the core area of known breeding units.
A. Juveniles are also easier to detect as they are easier to discern from the other age classes and often the parents have already been detected and the territory is therefore selected as an IOD post. Additionally, released birds up to 2 to 3 years can be identified individually thanks to the bleached feathers.
A. In general, it is considered difficult for non-professional ornithologists to determine the age of immature to subadult Bearded Vultures (especially subadult) and could therefore over-represent the number of observations under the category unknown.

B. The model of Schaub et al. (2009) is based on survival rates over the whole Alpine area and does not take differences in regions into account.
B. The model of Schaub et al. (2009) is based on only two survival rates. One for juveniles (1.cy) and one for all older birds.

Table 10. Proportion of Bearded Vultures per age class based on observations reported during the focal day during the IOD. Based on these observations the regional coordinators estimated a minimal and maximal number of Bearded Vultures per age class (estimated from observations E_{foc}). The estimate of the birds that are hypothetically present also includes territorial birds, the birds that are known to be present in the region, as well as the GPS-tagged birds that have not been identified during the IOD period (estimated hypothetically present E_{hyp}). In 2024 61 chicks fledged in the wild, and 9 birds were released. Before the IOD, one wild-hatched bird (Trupchun2024) died. Therefore, the actual total number of observable birds would be 69. It is most likely, that there are double counts and observed juveniles have been counted a second time assuming they were not observed.

Age class	Observed	Estimated				Predicted	
	focal day only	Efoc		Ehyp		Model Schaub et al. 2009	
	absolut	mean(min,max)	%	mean(min,max)	%	absolut	%
adult	671	218	58%	285	59%	**258**	**51%**
subadult	52	28	8%	37	8%	**74**	**15%**
immature	128	58	16%	71	15%	**104**	**21%**
juvenile	128	52	14%	70	15%	**70**	**14%**
unknown	76	17	5%	17	4%	-	-
Total	**1055**	**373**	**100%**	**480**	**100%**	**506**	**100%**

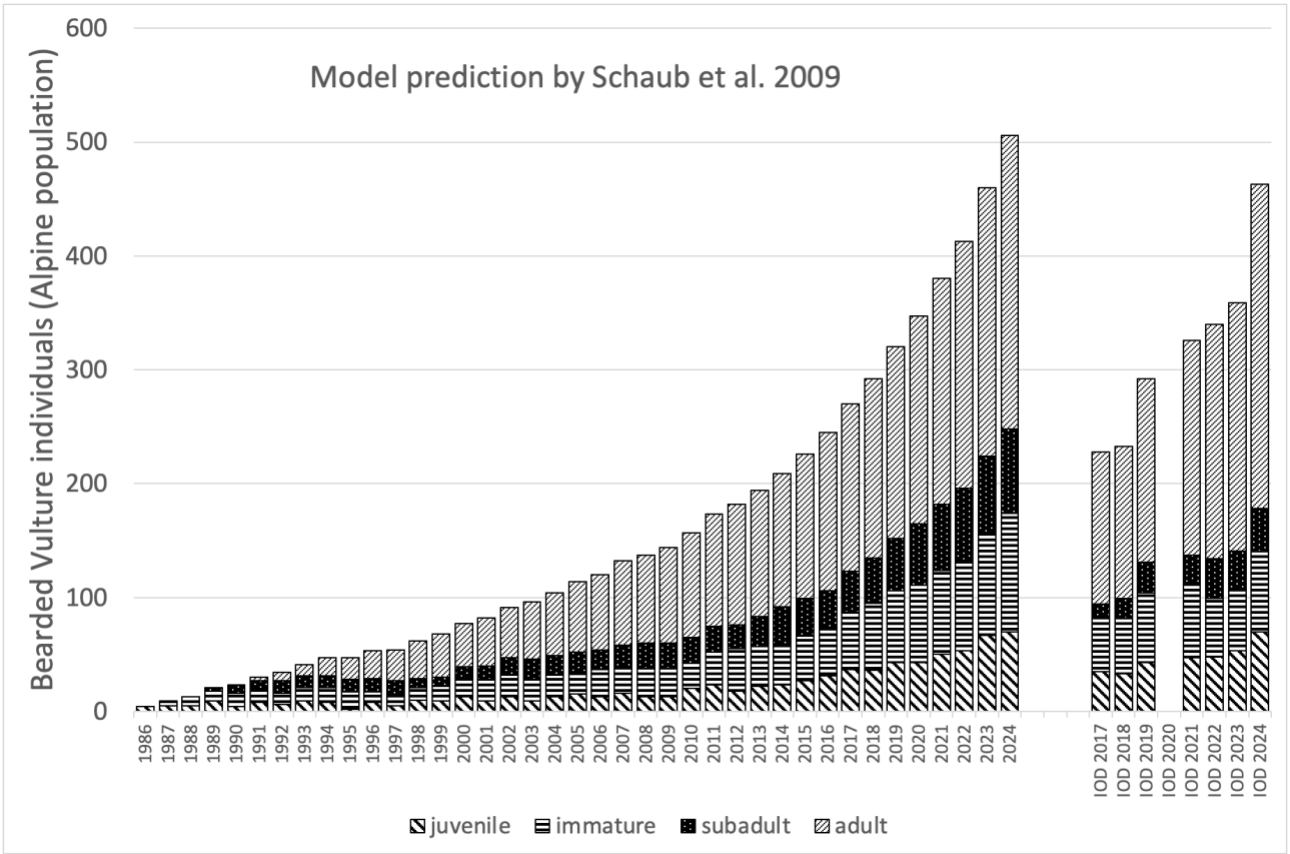

Figure 7. Predicted number of Bearded Vultures per age class according to the demographic model by Schaub et al. 2009 in comparison to the estimated number of birds E_{hyp} that should hypothetically be present based on observation data (IOD) and expert knowledge from regional coordinators (average from minimal and maximal estimate see Table 10).

5.7 Spatial distribution of age groups

From 371 sites 1’162 Bearded Vulture sightings have been recorded during the whole period, while 1’103 observations were reported at 789 sites during the focal day (***Table 3***).

In terms of reintroduction and resettlement of a species like the Bearded Vulture, it is of interest to gain a picture of the spatial distribution of different age classes. In particular, the presence of sexually mature birds can be an indicator for the formation of new reproductive units.

The following figures (***Figure 8 - Figure 14***) show the presence of Bearded Vultures subdivided in the two age groups adult and non-adult (juvenile, immature, subadult) at the regional level and give a more detailed overview on the Bearded Vulture distribution during the whole observation period. Each symbol on the map represents the position of an observation site, while the white dots represent sites where no Bearded Vulture was observed.

5.7.1 Alpine range

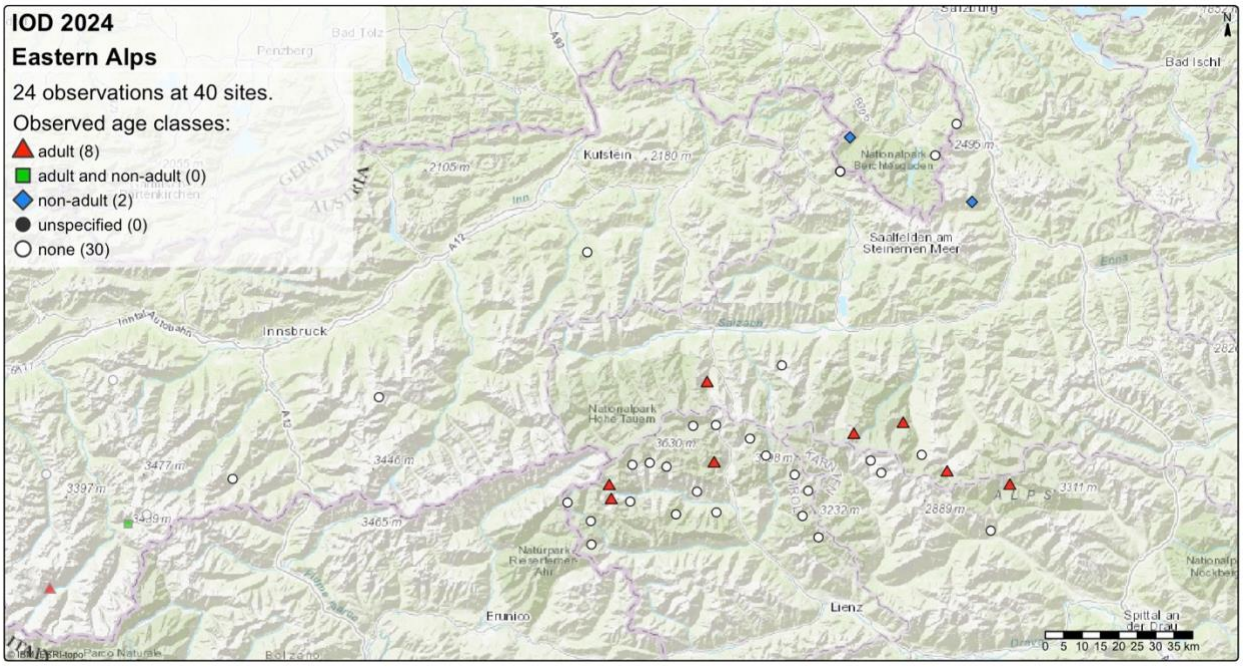

Figure 8. Age class distribution observed at 24 sites in the Eastern Alps during the IOD 2024.

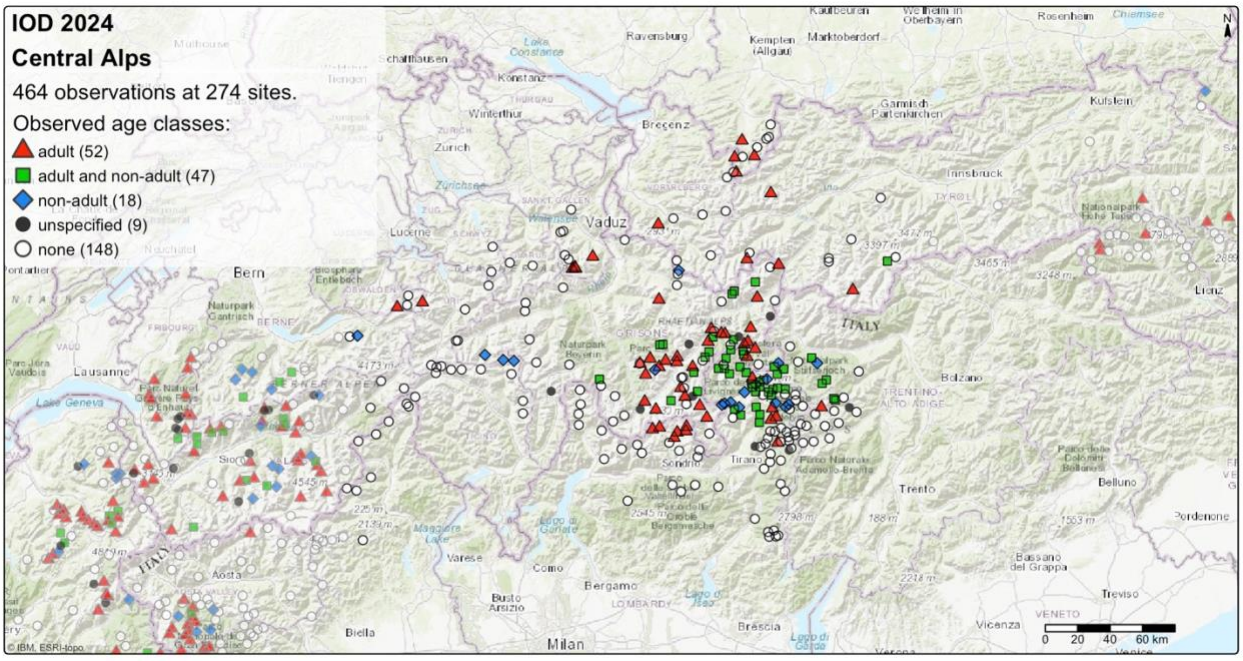

Figure 9. Age class distribution observed at 274 sites in the Central Alps during the IOD 2024.

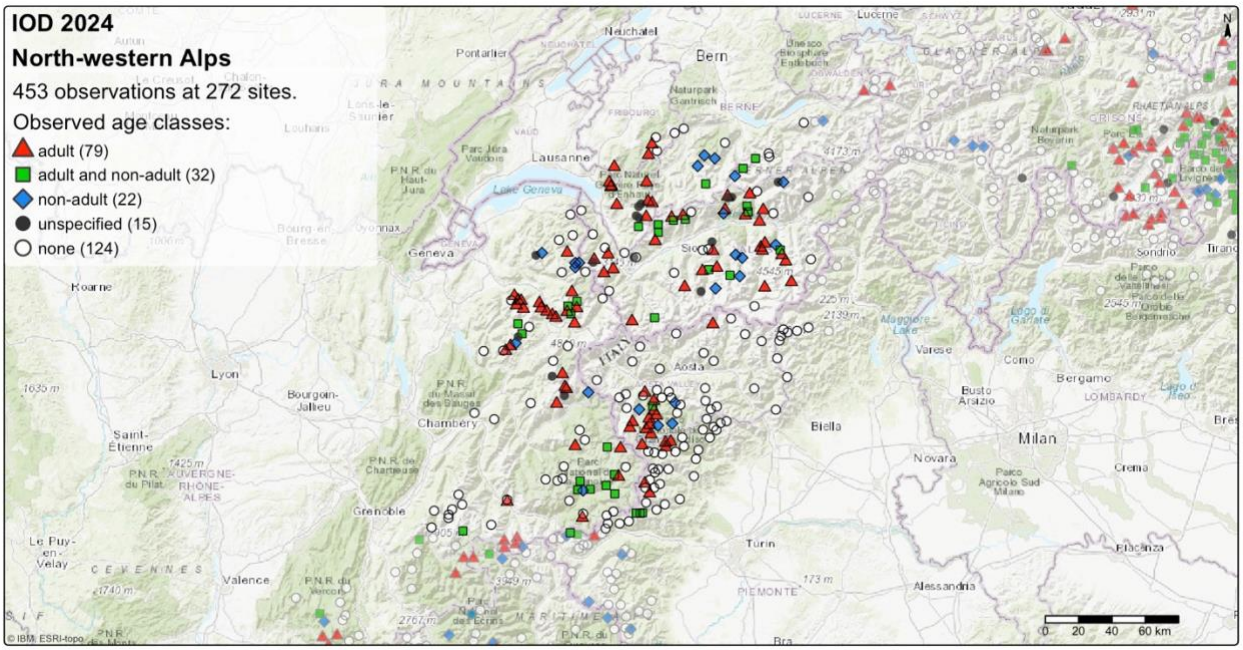

Figure 10. Age class distribution observed at 272 sites in the north-western Alps during the IOD 2024.

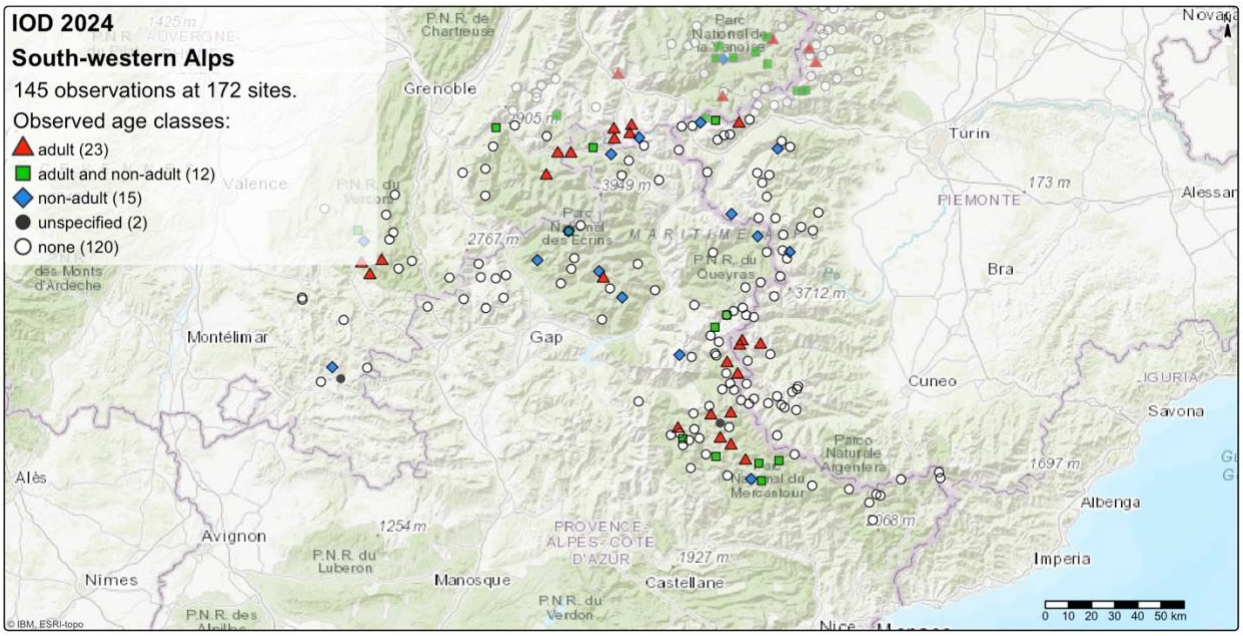

Figure 11. Age class distribution observed at 172 sites in the south-western Alps during the IOD 2024.

5.7.2 Massif Central & French Pre-Pyrenees

Figure 12. Age class distribution observed at 34 sites in the region of the Massif Central and the French Pyrenees during the IOD 2024.

5.7.3 Spain (without Pyrenees)

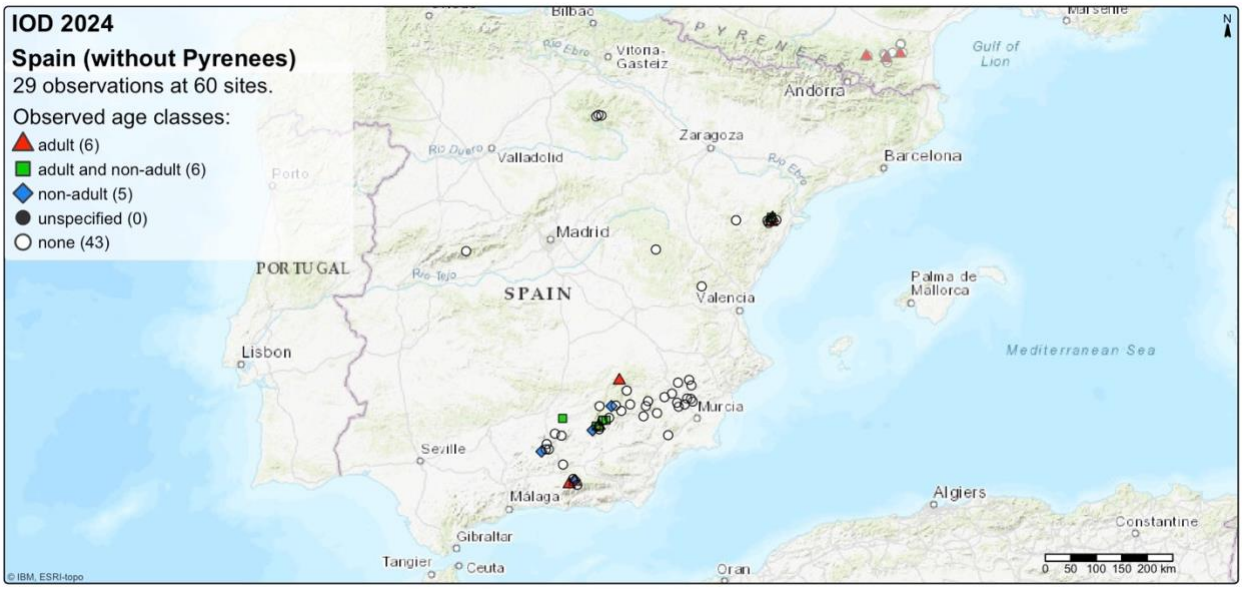

Figure 13. Age class distribution observed at 60 sites in Spain during the IOD 2024.

5.7.4 Bulgaria

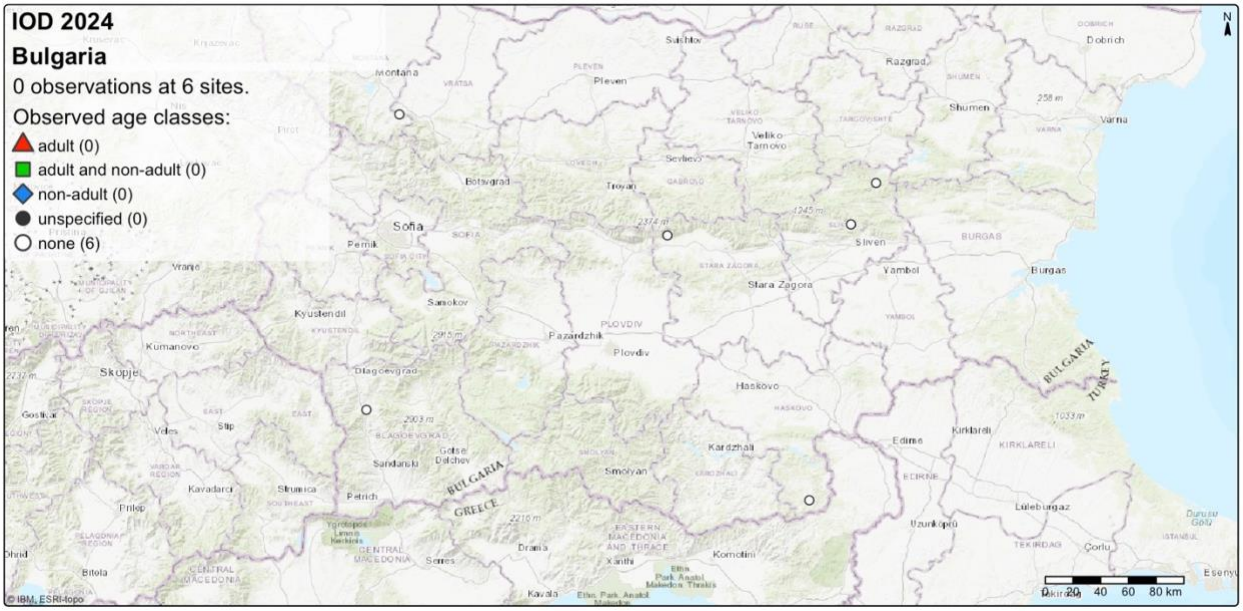

Figure 14. Age class distribution observed at 6 sites in Bulgaria during the IOD 2024.

6 Outlook 2025

In 2025 the focal day will be on Saturday, 11.10.2025 with the observation period from the 11th October to the 19th October. There is no alternative date for the IOD focal day. Each region has to decide if weather permits counting birds on the focal day. This will have consequences on the possibility of population estimates locally and at population scale.

Focal day **Sat 11th of October 2025**
Period **11th - 19th of October 2025**

Even though a period of one week was chosen for public communication, we would like to stress the importance of focused observation intensity. Observations can be cumulated only within the core period. Therefore, **the count by specialists and volunteers on observation posts shall be carried out only during the focal day.**

The focal time for the count starts at 10 am to at least 3 pm.

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