

Actions of FWFF for Black Vulture reintroduction in Kresna Gorge, Bulgaria

By Nadya Vangelova- Project Coordinator LIFE11 NAT /BG/363
Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna (FWFF) www.fwff.org



LIFE for Kresna Gorge

Conservation of birds of prey in Kresna Gorge, Bulgaria



@ Coordination meeting for black vulture reintroduction projects in Europe

GREFA and VCF

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Grupo de Rehabilitación de la Fauna Autóctona y su Hábitat
Apartado de Correos 11
28220 Majadahonda (Madrid)
Tel: 91 638 75 50
Fax: 91 638 74 11





Map of vulture areas on Balkans



Arrows show the Griffon Vulture re-introduction sites on Balkans , the polygons – existing colonies



Kresna Gorge, SW Bulgaria

- The area is found between the Eastern Rhodopian (Bulgaria/Greece)- (200 km away) and the Macedonian (less than 100 km away) vulture communities.
- Deep valley of River Struma of about 200 m.a.s.l surrounded by high mountains of Rila and Pirin with peaks upraising to nearly 3000 m.a.s.l.
- Mediterranean climate in the bottom of the valley and alpine climate in the mountains support transhumant livestock husbandry (livestock **carcass annual biomass at 50 km radius around Kresna Gorge is calculated to 670 tons**).
- **The cliffs in the bottom of the valley are not too many and big enough to support large Griffon Vulture population.** The area is generally more suitable for the Black Vulture (old forest patches on steep slopes), the Egyptian Vulture (small cliffs evenly distributed along the valley) and the Bearded Vulture (large cliffs in high mountains).



FWFF activities in Kresna Gorge

Живот за
Кресненското
дефиле

Цели на проекта:

- Намаляване на преките и индиректните заплахи над хищните птици в Югозападна България.
- Увеличаване на популацията на емблематични за района видове.
- Подобряване на местообитанията за хищните птици, влечугите и бозайниците в териториите в Natura 2000.
- Подобряване на отношението към хищните птици в района.

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NATURA 2000, LIFE, BIOPARC, ZOO DE DOUÉ LA FONTAINE

- Compensation and Prevention Programme for depredated livestock started 2003 and is on-going. It aims at reduction of Man/predators conflict and subsequent poison baits use. FWFF owns sheep, goat and cattle herds and provide animals to direct replacement of affected farmers. Additionally guarding dogs and electric fences are provided to shepherds to avoid depredation. Changes in the husbandry practices (as shifting from sheep and goats rearing to cattle) is also advised in areas where the attacks are frequent and none of the mitigation actions provide necessary result.
- Established feeding sites for vultures
- Reintroduced Griffon Vulture since 2010, although the area is not the optimal one for the Griffon Vulture (because of insufficient size and abundance of cliffs) its return in the area is considered an important prerequisite for reintroduction of the Black and later to Bearded Vulture, but also as a tool for attracting and reestablishment of the Egyptian Vulture population in the area.
- Active public awareness initiatives are applied and the local community is involved in many actions related to vulture conservation – livestock rearing, sustainable hunting, eco-tourism and others.

Achievements

- Elaborated viability study for re-introduction of Black Vulture in Kresna Gorge
- Preparation of the area for re-introduction of the Black Vulture: In 2003 for the last time a pair of Egyptian Vulture bred in the area of Kresna Gorge. Black and Griffon Vultures have not been observed for decades. Thanks to FWFF efforts in 2013 more than 100 Griffon Vultures have passed and spent some time in Kresna Gorge, twice a Black Vulture was observed at the feeding site and at least three different Egyptian Vultures were attracted.
- Establishing **Griffon Vulture colony** (started 2010- at the moment 16 settled and about 100 (on passage) birds observed annually; two pairs formed in 2014), **feeding sites operation, threats mitigation** (electric pylons insulation, against poison activities, raising public awareness etc.)
- Vultures eco-tourist center in Kresna Gorge.
- Initiatives for wild ungulates (re)introductions (Fallow Deer) and population increase (Chamois, Wild Boar, Roe Deer) as alternative food source for wolves and vultures.
- Established captive breeding facility for Black and Egyptian Vultures



Future plans

- Captive breeding stock of Black Vulture in Kresna Gorge of about 5 to 9 pairs to be established until 2017
- Releasing captive bred or rehabilitated juveniles in Kresna Gorge at earliest possible occasion, but not competing Balkan Mountains project, where FWFF will work in partnership with Green Balkans.
- Providing captive bred juveniles to other projects on Balkans, if releases in Kresna Gorge are to be postponed, or other priority sites are considered e.g. Balkan Mountain, Croatia, FYROM, etc.

