



Joining forces against wildlife poisoning: the work of the ANTIPOISON TASK FORCE in Greece

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LIFE16 NAT/00/00074

Wildlife poisoning in Greece



Identified as one of the most important conservation problems for scavenger species in Greece (birds of prey, bears, wolves etc.), in particular for vultures.



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- Egyptian vulture: **CR 5 bp**
- Bearded vulture: **CR 6-7 bp**
- Cinereous vulture: **EN 30 - 35 bp**
- Griffon vulture:
 - Mainland Greece **CR 20 bp**
 - Crete **VU 350 bp**



Origins of the practice



1900

Common practice in the Balkans

Since the beginning of the 20th century and especially after World War II, the use of PB evolved into a common practice in the Greek countryside.

1969

Strychnine

Mass poisoning of raptors and scavenger mammals.

1981

Potassium cyanide

Until the early 90's only the Forestry Service was allowed to use cyanide for the control of “vermin species” (wolf and fox).

1993

BANNED

Since 1993 the use of cyanide is completely forbidden.

2018

Still a common practice

However, the use of PB is still a wide-spread practice.

Reasons & drivers behind this practice



To kill **predators** (mainly large carnivores but not only) that cause losses in livestock, beehives or crops.

To kill **working dogs**.

To kill **feral dogs**.

To control **fox** populations:

- Predates on game
- Creates problems during hunting dog training

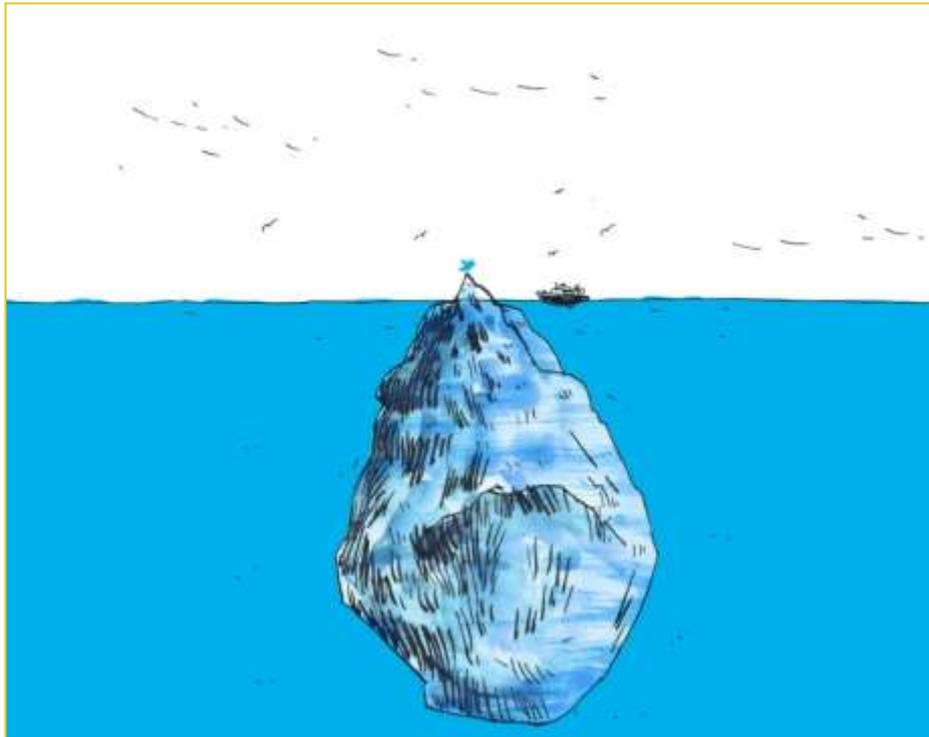
To **solve personal disputes**.



How big is the problem?



The known incidents in relation to those that are not detected could easily be compared to the tip of an iceberg.

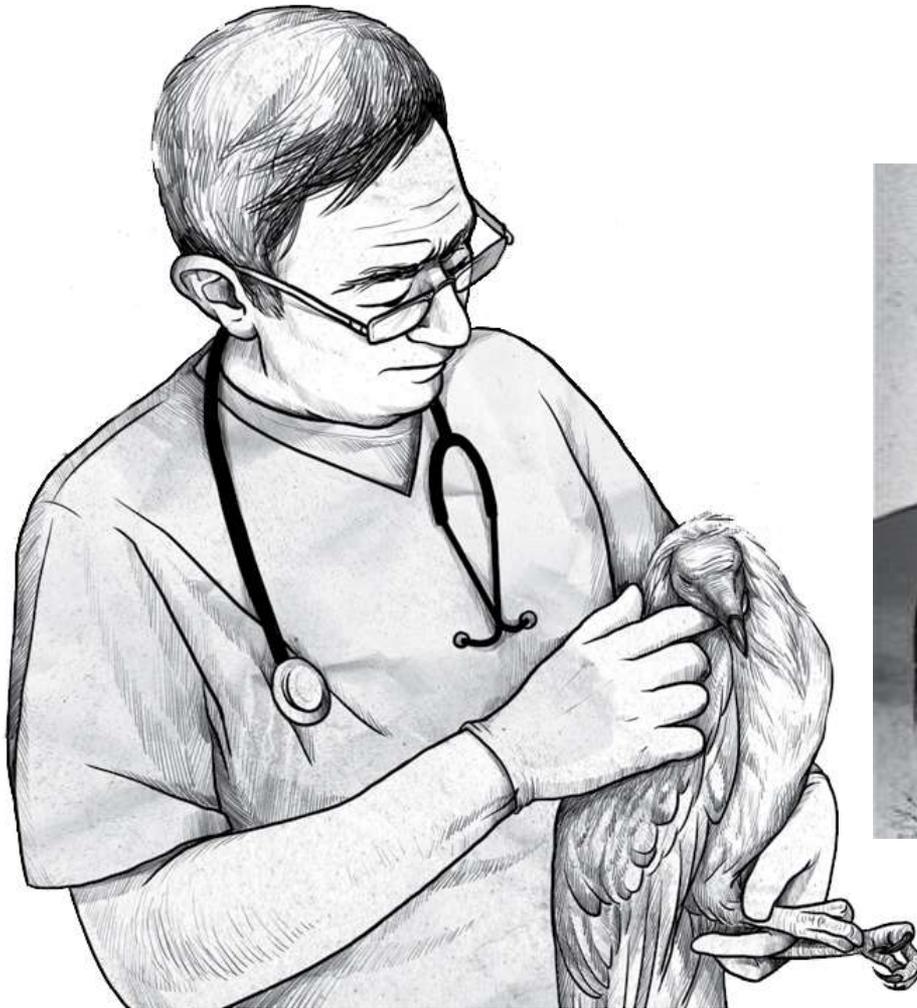


Even in the best of cases, only about **10%** of the poisoned animals is detected!

The story of Lazarus



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The story of Lazarus

Early April 2012



2/4/2013



29/4/2012



The mass poisoning in Nestos Straits



- ✗ Collapse of the largest remaining colony of Griffon vulture in mainland Greece (15 pairs)
- ✗ Local extinction of Golden eagle (2 pairs)



- ✓ European Commission started an infringement procedure against Greece (Reasoned Opinion)
- ✓ Intervention of the Greek Ombudsman
- ✓ Creation of the Antipoison Task Force



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Poison: Carbofuran
Bait: dead horse



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The Antipoison Task Force



MEMBERS: ANIMA, ARCTOUROS, Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature (HSPN), Hellenic Ornithological Society/BirdLife Greece (HOS) Callisto, WWF Greece, NHMC/UoC

COORDINATION: HOS



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TASK:

- ❖ To promote proposals & institutional changes to eradicate wildlife poisoning
- ❖ To raise awareness at local & national level.



1st systematic recording of poisoning incidents



Poisoning Incidents Recording Protocol

In every poisoning incident, the following data are recorded:

1. Basic information: date, location, source of information etc.
2. Involved animals: Wild or domestic, Number of animals, Sample condition (fresh, decay, advanced decay, feathers or/and bones)
3. Information on the bait: type, number, toxicological analysis (type of poison, active ingredient, status of use, lab name)
4. Clinical examination, autopsy
5. Possible motive
6. Use of Canine Team (Y/N)
7. Complaint filed (Y/N)

All available data are registered into the **Antipoison DataBase** (Microsoft Access 2007) managed by HOS

What we have achieved so far (I)



- ☺ Thanks to the Ombudsman's intervention meetings were held with the competent Ministries (Environment & Agriculture) -> Ministerial Circular on how to tackle poisoning incidents by pesticides.
- ☺ Publication of reports regarding the situation of illegal poisoning in the Greek countryside - publicly available also on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- ☺ Submission of a National Strategy against Wildlife Poisoning to the relevant ministries (under consideration).
- ☺ Poison baits issue included in the agenda of the extraordinary meeting of the Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection of the Greek Parliament.



What we have achieved so far (II)



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- ☺ Ministerial decision endorsing Local Action Plans against the illegal use of poison baits
- ☺ The infringement procedure has urged the MoE to start the 5-year programme "Fighting the use of poison baits", investing in it a total budget of 400.000 euros
- ☺ Publication of relevant scientific paper: *Animal mortality and illegal poison bait use in Greece*, Environmental Monitoring and Assessment 190(8):488.

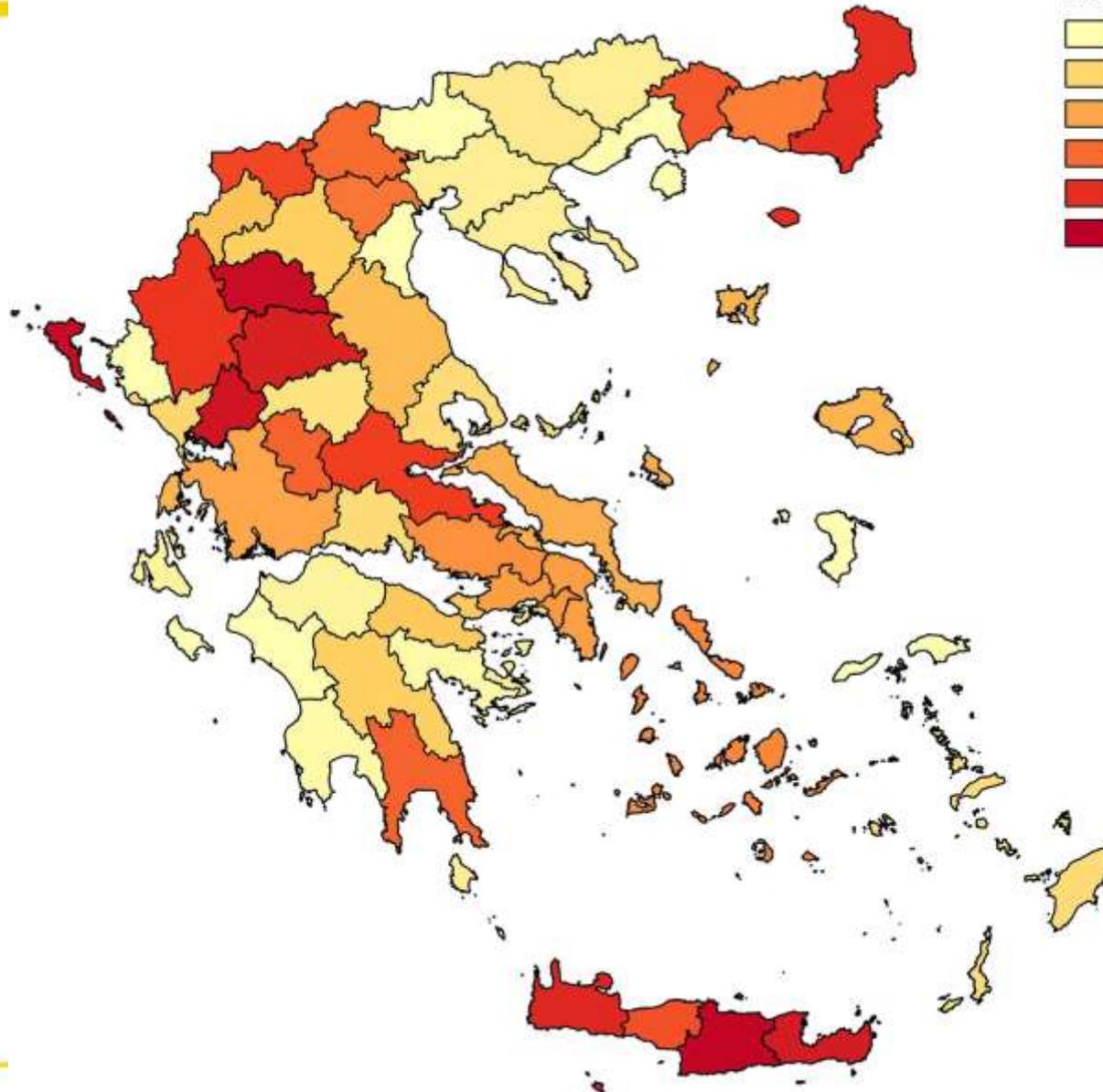
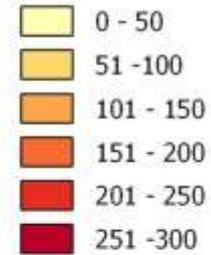


Some figures (2000-2016)



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No. poisoned animals

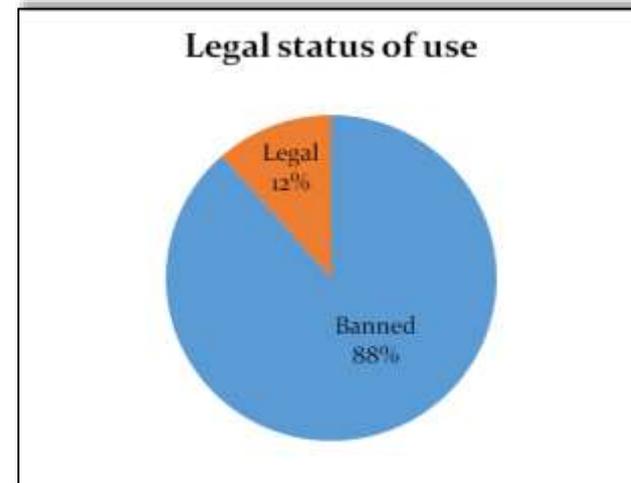
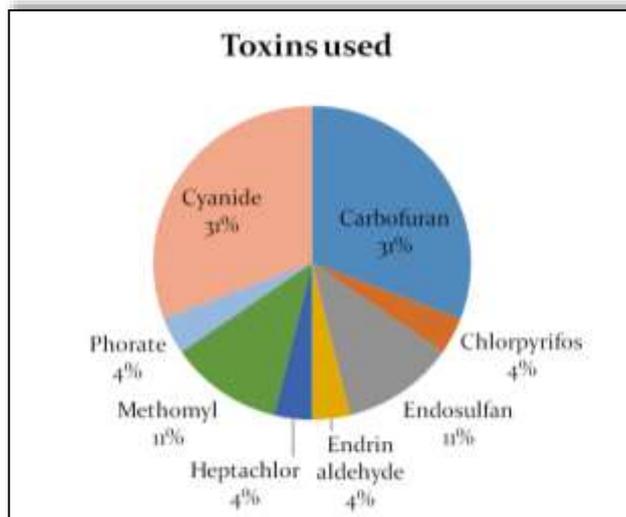
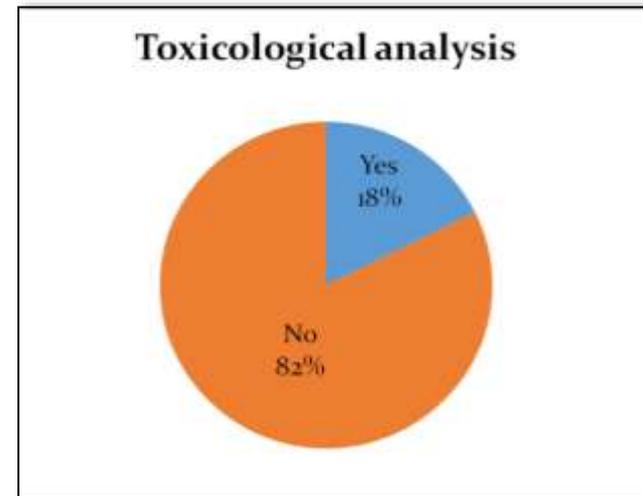
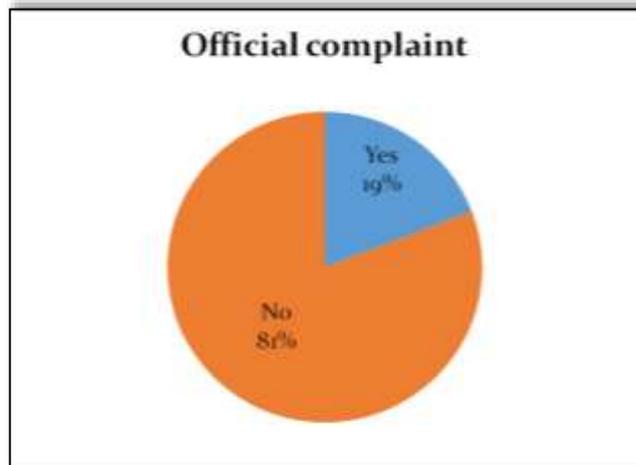


Other interesting findings (Report 2012-2015)



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193 poisoning incidents



Black market of banned pesticides

14 days' jail for killing 406 wedge-tailed eagles 'inadequate', animal groups say

Murray James Silvester plead guilty to poisoning eagles over two years at Victorian property

Calla Wahlquist

@callapilla

Tue 25 Sep 2018 08:12 BST



7,804



▲ Murray James Silvester was jailed for 14 days and fined \$2,500 for killing the wedge-tailed eagles. Photograph: DELWP

Animal welfare groups have criticised a two-week jail sentence imposed against a man who killed 406 wedge-tailed eagles in Victoria as too lenient.

Best practices

Canine teams



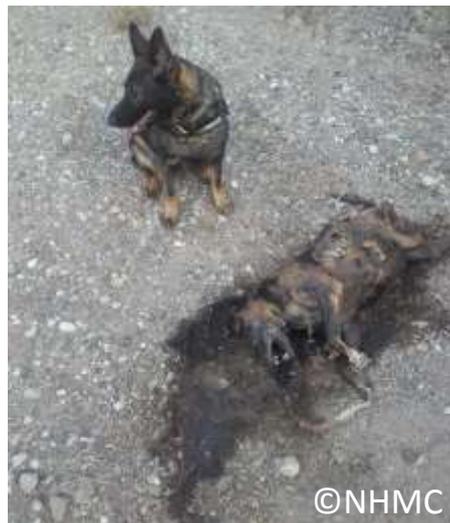
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Thrace - Central Greece (Mar. 2014 - Jun. 2018)

- 306 patrols/ 685 km
- 146 p.a. - 146 p.b.
- Complaints against unknown persons: 35
- Toxicological analyses: 42
- Cases taken to Court: **0%**

Crete (July 2016 - Aug. 2018)

- 235 patrols
- 162 p.a. - 441 p.b.
- Complaints against unknown persons: 79
- Toxicological analyses: 16
- Cases taken to Court: **0%**

Best practices

Training seminars



- ❑ Forestry Service
- ❑ Management Bodies of Protected Areas
- ❑ Police
- ❑ Coast Guard
- ❑ Customs
- ❑ Private hunting guards



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Best practices

Local Action Plans against wildlife poisoning



- Identify high-risk areas: prioritize actions
- Establish an official procedure on how to manage poisoning incidents



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An important step!

BUT

the effectiveness of the LAPs will depend on their proper implementation and the active involvement of all the authorities and bodies involved.



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Best practices

Stakeholders networks



Minimizing motives:

- ✓ Providing electric fences and Greek shepherd dogs for the protection of livestock from carnivores.
- ✓ Creation of a network of shepherds, beekeepers, farmers and hunters against wildlife poisoning.



Best practices

Raising awareness



Public awareness campaigns on the detrimental effect of poison to wildlife, public health and economic activities in the countryside are essential to prevent this illegal practice.



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Zero tolerance against wildlife poisoning!



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Best practices

Educational activities



Increase of awareness among local children



Immediate access to parents!



Thank you!



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