Illegal raptor poisonings in Hungary: experiences of the Helicon and PannonEagle LIFE projects

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The problem

- The illegal poisoning of raptors means a huge problem worldwide.
• HELICON LIFE: Conservation of imperial eagles by managing human-eagle conflicts in Hungary 2012 - 2016 www.imperialeagle.hu

• PANNONEAGLE LIFE: Conservation of the eastern imperial eagle by decreasing human-caused mortality in the Pannonian Region 2016-2022 www.imperialeagle.eu
2005: these two poisoned IEs were found
Mortality causes of imperial eagle in Hungary between 1980-2004 (n=45)

- Illegal poisoning
- Probable poisoning
  - Electrocution
  - Collision with vehicle
- Physical Injury
- Shooting
- Accidental poisoning
- Disease
- Collision with powerline
- Other
- Unknown

Mortality causes of imperial eagle in Hungary between 2005-2016 (n=166)

- Illegal poisoning
- Probable poisoning
  - Electrocution
  - Collision with vehicle
- Physical Injury
- Shooting
- Accidental poisoning
- Disease
- Collision with powerline
- Other
- Unknown
• Biggest threat for strictly protected Imperial Eagles: illegal predator poisoning
• between 2000-2018:
  • 1824 poisoned victims (birds and mammals) found - 1559 protected species
  • 234 eagles: 142 White-tailed eagles, 88 Imperial eagles, 3 Golden eagles, 1 Lesser spotted eagle
Poisoned protected bird species found between 2000-2015

Common buzzard is the most frequently poisoned protected bird species during the period.
Who?

Hunters/
Game keepers

Pigeon
keepers

Poultry
farmers

Fish farmers

Why?

Hunters/
Game keepers

Pigeon
keepers

Poultry
farmers

Fish farmers
Eagle poisoning cases in Hungary (2005-2016)
But in 2012, the increase of the population stopped.
Problems of enforcement  Solutions

• Difficulties in detection → Use of detection dog units

• Wildlife crimes are not taken seriously enough → Protocols, trainings Awareness raising
Poison and carcass searching dog units in Europe

Spain

- since 2004
- labradors, German shepherds, Belgian malinois
Poison and carcass searching dog units in Europe

Italy
• since 2010
• LIFE Antidoto
• LIFE Pluto
And more…
HUNGARY
- since 2013
- first in Central Europe
- Ranger Service
PannonEagle LIFE dogs
Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria
Main tasks

• To find poisoned birds and poisonous baits: reported and random field searches

• House searches during the investigative phase

• Prevention
• 13.09.06 Tiszaalpár
• 12 marsh harriers, 3 saker falcons, 1 buzzards, injected egg baits, 4 foxes)
Carbofuran

banned since 2008 in the EU, (since 2014 in Serbia)
Poisoned protected birds and mammals in Hungary between 2006 - 2017
Number of eagles found poisoned in Hungary between 2006-2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>DETECTED bird crime cases</th>
<th>POLICE INVESTIGATION started in bird crime cases</th>
<th>PROSECUTION started in bird crime cases</th>
<th>CONVICTION in bird crime cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>Slovakia</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Pannonia</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Outcomes of the bird crime cases in the Pannonian region in year 2017*
Verdicts:
- sentenced in 4 cases:
  - Professional hunter - 3 marsh harriers – small financial penalty €300
  - 2 professional hunter - 2 imperial eagles + 1 marsh harrier – financial penalty €4000
  - Professional hunter - Several stuffed birds – 1 year 3 months (suspended for 2 years) and € 2400
  - Duck farmer - 14 buzzards -1 year 7 months (suspended for 3 years)
  - Some case on going...
- Imperial eagle
- White-tailed eagles (2)
- Common buzzards (6)
- **Golden jackals** (9)
- Fox
- Dog
- Magpies (3)

Total: 23 victims
Thank you for your attention!