Fighting wildlife crime in Greece: positive results of a never ending battle

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BirdLife Greece’s committed to the fight against wildlife crime

Long list of projects dealing with wildlife crime:

✓ LIFE project “The return of the Neophron”
✓ LIFE project “New Life for the Egyptian Vulture”
✓ LIFE project “Safeguarding the Lesser White-fronted Goose”
✓ LIFE project “Safe heaven for wild birds”
✓ Safe Flyways - stop illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean
✓ Balkan Antipoisoning Project
✓ ...
Egyptian vulture: then and now

80% decline in the Balkans over the last 30 years

Velevski et al. 2015

1850
1980
2018
Long list of threats...

Due to “normal” human activities:
- Habitat loss & degradation
- Reduced food availability
- Human disturbance
- Electrocution and collision

Due to wildlife crime:
- Poison
- Direct persecution
- Illegal trade for collectors (taxidermy & eggs)
- Illegal trade for belief-based practices (Africa)
Causes of EV known mortality cases (1997-2015) in GR & BG

n=61

- Unknown: 25%
- Natural causes: 18%
- Human-induced causes: 57%

Poisoning: 86%
- 30 cases

Direct persecution: 8%
- 3 cases

Electrocution: 6%
- 2 cases
The story of Lazaros
The story of Paschalis
Such big problems... what can NGOs do?

**LIFE+ “The Return of the Neophron”**
- 2011 - 2016
- 4 NGOs from 3 countries working in Bulgaria & Greece
- 2,500,000€

**LIFE “Egyptian vulture New LIFE”**
- 2017 - 2022
- 10 NGOs working in 14 countries in the Balkans (Bulgaria, Greece, FYROM, Albania), Middle East (Turkey, Syria, Lebanon & Egypt) and Africa (Ethiopia, Chad, Nigeria & Niger)
- 5,850,000€
Actions against wildlife crime: Preventive

✓ **Aim:** hinder nest robbing and direct persecution at nests
✓ **Action:** Nest guarding
  ✓ Direct guarding with wardens
  ✓ Guarding with CCTV cameras and trap cameras
  ✓ Approx. 50% of nests guarded
Actions against wildlife crime: Preventive

✓ **Aim**: reduce drivers behind the use of poison baits among livestock breeders.

✓ **Action**: test methods to reduce wildlife conflict due to predation of livestock
  ✓ Distribution of local races of sheepdogs and creation of network of breeders
  ✓ Veterinary care of sheepdogs
  ✓ Testing of alternative methods such as fladries and light systems
Actions against wildlife crime: enforcement

- **Aim:** detect poison events, help identify perpetrators and remove poison from the environment
- **Action:** creation and operation of two antipoison dog units
  - Two antipoison dog units working for four years now in Meteora & Thrace
  - > 300 patrols = 146 poisoned animals & 146 poison baits found
  - Biodiversity not the only victim, most losses among working dogs
  - Intensive use of banned pesticides revealed
Aim: Lobbying national and local authorities to promote proposals & institutional changes to address the problem of poison baits.

Action: operation of a National Antipoison Task Force
- Management of a National DB recording poisoning events
- Drafting of National Strategy against illegal use of poison baits
- Proposal of changes needed in legal framework regulating illegal use of poison baits
- Direct collaboration with relevant Ministries
Actions against wildlife crime: Advocacy & policy

- Aim: better management of poison events at national and local level
- Action: endorsement of SAP and Local Antipoison Action Plans
- Endorsement of actions plans setting action protocols and distributing responsibilities among national and local authorities

Aim: better management of poison events at national and local level

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Endorsement of actions plans setting action protocols and distributing responsibilities among national and local authorities
Actions against wildlife crime: Awareness raising & capacity building

✓ **Aim**: increase of awareness among local communities to hinder illegal use of poison baits.

✓ **Action**: creation of network of local stakeholders against poison

  ✓ Network of over 170 land users and public bodies joining the network and still growing

  ✓ Distribution of tools to hinder drivers behind the use of poison (electric fences, sheepdogs, etc)

  ✓ Distribution of tools among relevant authorities to help manage poison events (antipoison kits, freezers, GPS)
Actions against wildlife crime: Awareness raising & capacity building

✓ **Aim:** increase capacity among relevant authorities to better fight illegal use of poison baits and bird crime.

✓ **Action:** informative & training seminars on poison bait management for law enforcement officers

  ✓ Over 450 staff members of the Forestry and Vet Services, Police and Game Guards have followed seminars on wildlife poisoning.

  ✓ Over 270 staff members of Greek Customs and Forestry Service have followed seminars on wildlife trafficking (particularly bird and egg robbing)

  ✓ One Greek Custom officer was trained in UK on bird crime issues
**Actions against wildlife crime: Awareness raising & capacity building**

- **Aim:** increase awareness among children and to reach parents.
- **Action:** environmental activities in schools and local communities
  - Creation of an environmental education kit focusing on wildlife poisoning.
  - Adoption of Egyptian vulture nests by schools.
  - Active involvement of kids in the fight against poison.
Actions against wildlife crime: Awareness raising & capacity building

✓ **Aim**: increase awareness among local communities.
✓ **Action**: production of printed and audiovisual material informing about the impact of the use of poison baits.
Actions against wildlife crime by our partner BSPB in Bulgaria

- Creation of a Handbook on Bird Crime for Custom officers (translated for use in Greece, Albania & FYROM)
- Increased capacity of Customs, Police & Prosecutors
- Creation of an anti-bird crime network involving NGOs, Police, MoEnv & Association of Prosecutors
- Increased communication & media interest on the matter
- Prosecutions! (High profile case: Mr. Ross)
Actions against wildlife crime by our partners in Middle East & Africa

- Campaign against direct persecution
- Awareness campaigns against the use of vultures in belief-based practices
- Capacity building of law enforcement bodies
- Alternative methods to decrease stray dog populations in Ethiopia
- Development of an app to record wildlife crime cases
Safeguarding the LWfG LIFE project

- Europe’s most threatened waterbird
- Illegal killing / overharvesting No 1 threat internationally

- 2011 - 2017
- 8 partners from 4 countries
- 2.300.000€
Safeguarding the LWfG LIFE project

SMART PATROL SYSTEM – OUTDOOR CCTV
► Detection of any movement day/night
► Radio the information to the mobile unit
► Direct mobile unit to the incident
► Cost effective patrol, less fuel
► Safer patrol
► **800 days** of patrolling and ca. **2,500 checks** to hunters etc. / info dissemination
► 21 hunting violations reported
► 60 Forest Guards trained
Safeguarding the LWfG LIFE project

✓ Training for hunting law enforcement staff
✓ Documentary on illegal killing and the Lesser White-fronted Goose in northern Greece
✓ Media work and open events
✓ TV and Radio spot
Safe Haven for Wild Birds LIFE project

✓ LIFE information 2011 – 2015
✓ 4 partners, 3 countries
✓ 785,000€

✓ Radio spot / TV spot
✓ Documentary
✓ Local events
✓ Extensive media coverage
✓ Environmental Education
✓ Ca. 60 M people reached
Thank you for your attention!!