



Treated incidents of Griffon Vultures in distress (2020-2024)

*LIFE WITH VULTURES: SAVING GRIFFON VULTURES IN CYPRUS
THROUGH CONCRETE CONSERVATION ACTIONS
(LIFE18 NAT/CY/001018)*

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About the project

LIFE with Vultures is a targeted conservation project for the protection of the Griffon Vulture in Cyprus. In this four-year endeavor (2019-2023), [BirdLife Cyprus](#), the [Game and Fauna Service](#), [Terra Cypria – The Cyprus Conservation Foundation](#) and the [Vulture Conservation Foundation](#) have joined forces to tackle the main threats facing the Griffon Vulture and prevent Cyprus' most threatened bird of prey from going extinct. The project has a €1,375,861 budget and is co-funded (60%) by the EU's LIFE programme. Find out more at: www.lifewithvultures.eu

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Summary in Greek / Περίληψη στα ελληνικά

Στο πλαίσιο της δράσης C1.1 του έργου “*LIFE with Vultures CY*”, στόχος ήταν η μείωση της θνησιμότητας του Γύπα (*Gyps fulvus*) από περιστατικά δηλητηρίασης μέσω της παραγωγής και διανομής βαλιτσάκια πρώτων βοηθειών. Η δράση αυτή συμπληρώνει τη λειτουργία των Ομάδων Ανίχνευσης Δηλητηριασμένων Δολωμάτων (ArDUs) που αυξάνουν τις πιθανότητες εντοπισμού δηλητηριασμένων Γυπών.

Τα βαλιτσάκια περιλάμβαναν βασικό κτηνιατρικό εξοπλισμό και φαρμακευτικό υλικό για την άμεση παροχή πρώτων βοηθειών, καθώς και φυλλάδιο με λεπτομερείς οδηγίες χρήσης. Περίπου 70 βαλιτσάκια παρήχθησαν τον Μάρτιο 2023 και διανεμήθηκαν στοχευμένα σε περιοχές όπου απαντάται ο Γύπας, όπως γραφεία και περίπολα της Υπηρεσίας Θήρας, Κοινοτικά Συμβούλια, τοπικούς αστυνομικούς σταθμούς, δασικούς σταθμούς, αγροτικούς κτηνιάτρους και μέλη του προγράμματος παρακολούθησης του BirdLife Cyprus.

Για την ορθή χρήση των βαλιτσών, οργανώθηκε εκπαιδευτικό σεμινάριο από το BirdLife Cyprus με την υποστήριξη του κτηνιάτρου Κωνσταντίνου Αντωνίου. Συμμετείχαν λειτουργοί της Υπηρεσίας Θήρας, του Τμήματος Δασών και των Βρετανικών Βάσεων, οι οποίοι εκπαιδεύτηκαν στη σωστή διαχείριση και παροχή πρώτων βοηθειών σε καθηλωμένα πουλιά.

Κατά την περίοδο 2020–2024 καταγράφηκαν δύο περιστατικά που αφορούσαν Γύπες οι οποίοι χρειάστηκαν ανθρώπινη παρέμβαση και κτηνιατρική φροντίδα. Ο Γύπας με το όνομα “Άρτεμις” (αριθμό δακτυλιδιού LLM), που είχε εισαχθεί στην Κύπρο από την Ισπανία το 2022, εντοπίστηκε ακίνητος μέσω GPS σε δασική περιοχή. Δεν υπήρχαν ενδείξεις δηλητηρίασης ή τραυματισμού, οπότε δεν χρειάστηκε η εφαρμογή πρώτων βοηθειών στο πεδίο. Το πουλί μεταφέρθηκε άμεσα σε κτηνίατρο για περίθαλψη και μετά από μερικές ημέρες στο κέντρο περίθαλψης άγριας ζωής της Υπηρεσίας Θήρας και Πανίδας, όπου αποθεραπεύτηκε πλήρως και απελευθερώθηκε τον Απρίλιο 2023.

Ο δεύτερος Γύπας, με το όνομα “Πόκο” (αριθμό δακτυλιδιού CAL), εντοπίστηκε εξασθενημένος και καθηλωμένος στην περιοχή Άγιου Ιωάννη. Και σε αυτή την περίπτωση δεν υπήρχαν ενδείξεις δηλητηρίασης ή τραυματισμού, οπότε δεν χρειάστηκε η εφαρμογή πρώτων βοηθειών στο πεδίο. Το πουλί μεταφέρθηκε άμεσα σε κτηνιατρική κλινική για περίθαλψη και έπειτα στο κέντρο περίθαλψης άγριας ζωής της Υπηρεσίας Θήρας και Πανίδας. Παρουσίαζε νευρολογικά συμπτώματα, χωρίς όμως να διαπιστωθεί η αιτία. Απελευθερώθηκε τον Απρίλιο 2025.

Εξετάσεις στα δύο πουλιά από τις Κτηνιατρικές Υπηρεσίες έδωσαν αρνητικά αποτελέσματα σε έλεγχο για γρίπη των πτηνών, ψευδοπανώλη ή πυρετού του Δυτικού Νείλου. Τα επίπεδα μολύβδου στο αίμα ήταν κάτω από το όριο τοξικότητας.

Η δράση C1.1 ενίσχυσε την ετοιμότητα και την ικανότητα παρέμβασης σε περιστατικά δηλητηρίασης, υποστηρίζοντας αποτελεσματικά τη διατήρηση του είδους.

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Introduction

In an effort to reduce mortality among Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) resulting from poisoning incidents, Action C1.1 of the “LIFE with Vultures CY” focused on the production and dissemination of anti-poison first-aid kits. This action complements the operation of Anti-poison Dog Units (ApDUs) under Action C1.2, which increases the likelihood of detecting poisoned vultures while they are still alive but incapacitated.

The purpose of the kits (see image 1 in Annex) was to provide basic but essential first aid to stabilize affected birds until they can be transferred to specialized veterinary care.

To ensure their effective use, BirdLife Cyprus organised a specialised training (see image 2 in Annex) with the support of the vet Constantinos Antoniou. Participants to the training were Game and Fauna Service wardens, officers from the Department of Forests, and wardens from the Sovereign Base Areas. Participants received specialized training on administering first aid to grounded vultures, including safe handling techniques and the application of the kit’s contents.

The first-aid kit included basic veterinary equipment for the immediate treatment of a poisoned bird, as well as a leaflet with detailed instructions for use. In total, approximately 70 first aid kits were prepared in early March 2023. Each kit was equipped with basic tools and veterinary drugs (Syringe, VetWraps, NaCl solution, Carbovet gel, alcohol, anti-parasitic solution and atropine required for the emergency treatment of poisoned or injured vultures. The kits were strategically distributed across key locations within the Griffon Vulture’s range. Recipients included GFS patrol units, Community Councils, local police stations, forest stations, and other frontline personnel such as rural veterinarians and BirdLife Cyprus monitoring programme participants.

Report on treated incidents between 2020 - 2024

Between 2020 – 2024, there were two recorded incidents involving Griffon Vultures that required human intervention and veterinary care.

The first case involved a Griffon Vulture with ring number LLM, named Artemis. This individual had been released in Cyprus in September 2022 as part of the restocking efforts, having been born in Spain in 2021.

The bird was detected via GPS as being unusually inactive in a dense forest area close to the core range of the species. Several attempts were made to capture it. For a few days, the GPS tag lost satellite connectivity and ceased transmitting, thus delaying the team to locate the bird. Eventually, on 7 March 2023, the vulture was located and retrieved (see image 3 in Annex). Upon collection, there were no signs of poisoning or physical injury, and thus, the first aid kit was not required. The bird was immediately transported to a veterinarian, where it received prompt care. After a short stay at the clinic, it was transferred to the Game and Fauna Service rehabilitation center for acclimatization and

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monitoring. The vulture was successfully released on 7 April 2023 in the presence of a local school group, as part of the project's educational and awareness-raising efforts.

The second incident concerned a Griffon Vulture with ring number CAL named Poco, also born in Spain in 2021 and released in Cyprus in September 2022. The GPS tag from this bird showed it was unusually inactive in the Agios Ioannis area. Game and Fauna Service made several attempts to capture it while it was still capable of flight. It was only after its condition deteriorated that it was successfully captured during the night on 11 March. As in the previous case, there were no strong indications of poisoning and the bird's condition did not necessitate immediate use of the first aid kit on the spot. However, the vulture was promptly transported to a specialized veterinary clinic, where it received thorough examinations and around 10 days of intensive care at the veterinary clinic (see image 4 in Annex). On 20 March 2023, it was transferred to the rehabilitation facility of the Game and Fauna Service (see image 5 in Annex), where it remained for approximately 40 days. The bird exhibited some neurological symptoms during its recovery. Despite comprehensive diagnostics, including X-rays and tests for lead poisoning, the exact cause of its condition could not be determined. Following a full recovery, the vulture was released on 30 April 2025, again in the presence of a local school group to help raise awareness about wildlife protection and the threats facing vultures.

Both birds were tested negative for Avian influenza, Newcastle disease, and West Nile. Xrays did not show injuries or shots. Lead levels were 24µg/kg for Vulture LLM and 60 µg/kg for Vulture CAL.

Conclusion

The implementation of Action C1.1, which included the workshop, and the preparation and distribution of first-aid kits has strengthened the capacity of field personnel to respond to poisoning and injury incidents affecting Griffon Vultures. Evidently, such incidents may occur and prompt reaction might save the life of a bird. While the first aid kits were not directly used in the two recorded interventions, their strategic availability and the associated training ensure preparedness for future cases where immediate care may be critical for survival. The successful rescue and rehabilitation of the two vultures also highlight the importance of rapid response mechanisms, continuous monitoring through GPS technology, and collaboration for species conservation.

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Annex – Images from the activities mentioned in this report



Image 1: First aid kits and leaflet



Image 2: First-aid workshop for wildlife

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Image 3: Rescue of Griffon Vulture LLM from Paphos Forest



Image 4: During veterinary care at the clinic (GV CAL)

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Image 5: Birds CAL (left) and LLM (right) at the Game and Fauna Service rehabilitation center

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