

Final Report: Statement 2000

In 2000 during the implementation of my first project financed by Whitley Award Foundation/ Rufford Small Grants, called "Studying the recent status of birds of prey in Macedonia" I found that well preserved population of vultures especially Griffon and Egyptian vultures still exist in Macedonia.

Furthermore Black Vultures and Bearded Vultures still occur as one of the last places in Europe. With further support from the Rufford Small Grants at the end of 2001, my second project implemented some basic measures for conservation of the endangered species of birds of prey. In that time some very serious cases of poisoning occurred in Bulgarian-Macedonian border area, and in one case 11 Griffon Vultures and 2 Imperial Eagles were poisoned. Following the investigation my team found that the most common case of illegal poisoning is the planting of poison in carcasses which are intended for large carnivore mammals. Most frequently wolves kill sheep and goats. The States of Bulgaria and Macedonia are doing nothing to help the sheep owners on this issue, which is why they often set poison, even this is forbidden by the law.

It is difficult to control such poisoning, and a lot of species as Griffon Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Black Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Imperial Eagle, Golden Eagle, Bear, Wolf, Raven etc, are carrion eating species - thus they become the most frequent victims of poisoning. Our current project is a continuation of the team's previous work in Macedonia and aims to reduce the threat by developing a Compensatory program of "one for one" scheme exchange of sheep. That means that when there is killed sheep by wild predators the FWFF will return to the shepherd the lost sheep by replacing it with a live one from the compensatory herd established by the FWFF. The herd will be established in Bulgarian - Macedonian border area, and will be considered as innovation, that could be multiplied in other regions later too. The Bulgarian- Macedonian Border area has the biggest wolf density and the most victims of predator attacks are registered there as well as the poisoning incidents.