



THE LINK BETWEEN THE BLACK VULTURE'S EUROPEAN POPULATIONS

Aegypius monachus: RESULTS OF THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE SPECIES IN THE PYRENEES

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Abstract

The black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) has a population concentrated in the SW end of its European range (more than 90% of the estimated total). Being a species whose reproductive strategy combines low breeding rates and high adult survival (strategy K), its ability to restore extinct populations is slow and complicated.

The reintroduction of the black vulture in the Pyrenees (RNC Boumort and Natural Espai d'Alinyà) plays a key role when it comes to establishing a bridge population between traditional Hispanic colonies and those that are being generated by homologous reintroduction projects, such as in SE France (Cévennes, Baronnies and Verdon).

Material and methods

Between 2007 and 2012, 38 individuals have been released, 20 males and 18 females of which, 35 are birds admitted for different reasons in the wildlife recovery centers and released after 6-12 months in acclimation cages. The remaining 3 are vultures born in captivity, released by hacking.

14 animals were equipped with conventional terrestrial transmitters and 20 with GPS satellite transmitters. All of them attached to the back of the bird through a Teflon harness provided with breaking points.

Results

In September of 2012 a total of 20 individuals remain in the project area. Two more are found in other colonies (Iruelas and Cévennes). 7 pairs have been formed, of which four are still active.

A total of 6 chicks are born of which 3 fledged (one in 2010 and two in 2012). This is a milestone for conservation on a continental scale considering that this has been an extinct species in the area for over a century.

Year after year it has been found an increasing tendency in the flow of wild black vultures, both Iberian and French, through the Pyrenees. In conclusion, the project has acted as a spur for such movements, thereby promoting long-term colonization and genetic exchange of the species.

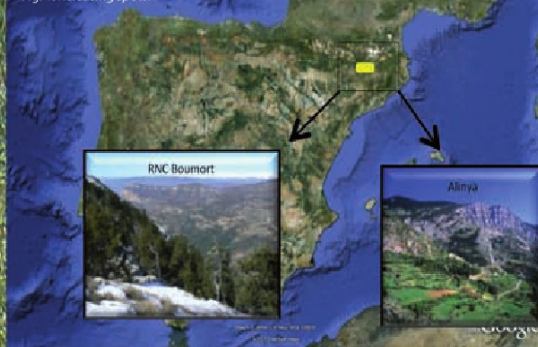
The Pyrenean area of Boumort-Alinyà is, nowadays, the only European region in which 4 species of vultures coexist, reproduce and may be interacting all at once: Bearded vulture, Black vulture, Griffon vulture and Egyptian vulture.

Acknowledgements

Red Eléctrica de España (REE), special partner of the program.
CR de Los Hornos (Cáceres), the origin of most of the vultures.
Victor García Matarranz (MARM).

For more information, please consult: <http://blackvulturepyrenees.org>
Photos: Marc Gálvez, Mario Álvarez, Ernesto Álvarez and Francesc Muntada.

Fig. 1. Releasing spots.



Graphic. 1. Release timings

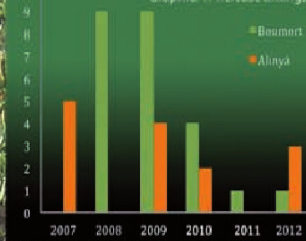


Fig. 2. Movements of the first chick born in the project.



One of the three black vultures born in Boumort in 2012



Adult Bearded vulture



Captive-bred chick born in GREFA in the hack site in Boumort



Egyptian vulture



Griffon vulture

