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LIFE with Vultures:

Saving Griffon Vultures in Cyprus through concrete conservation actions

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The Project (*LIFEwithVulturesCY*)

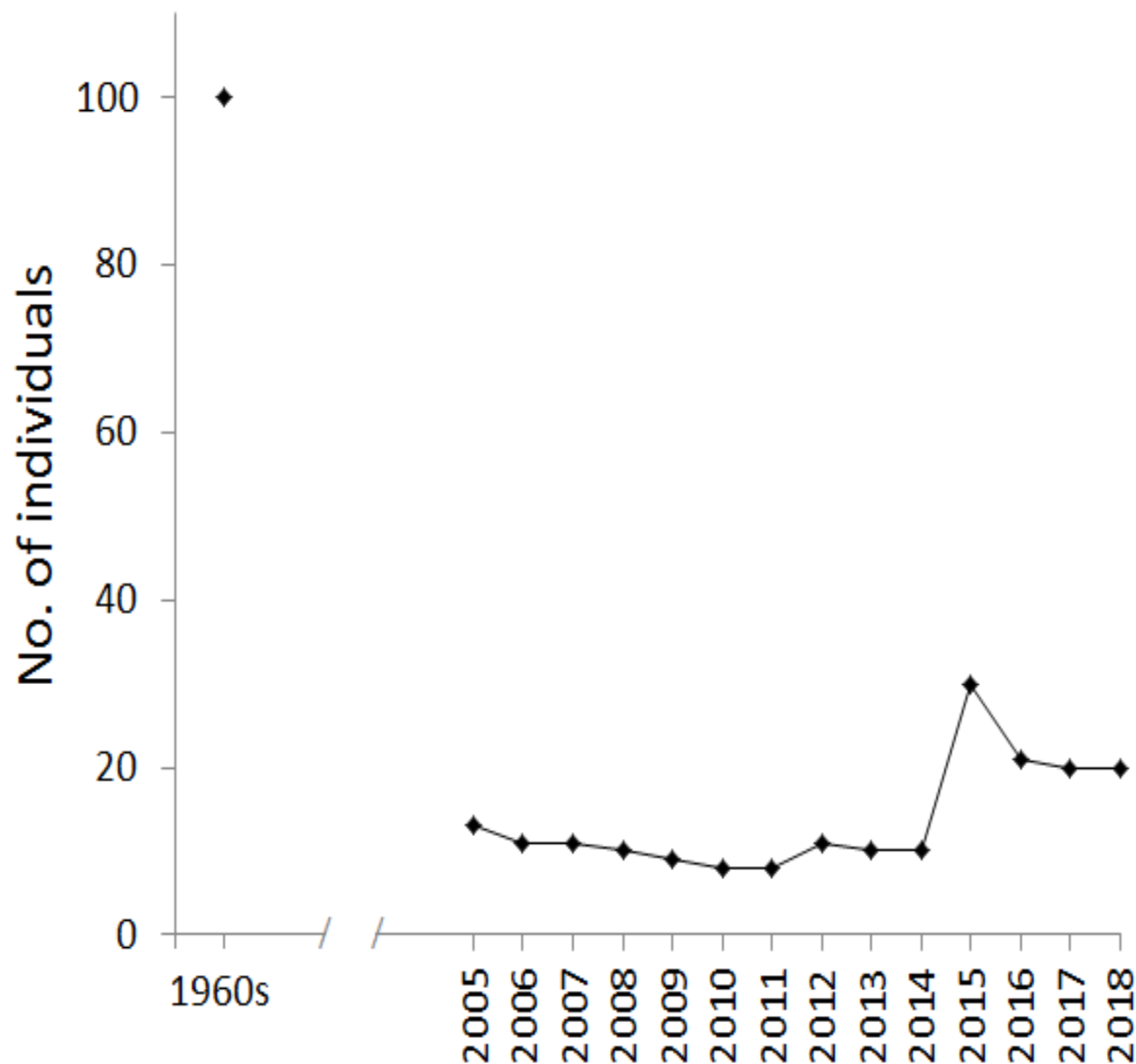


- Project start: October 2019 & Duration: 4 years.
- The Project implementation area: 9 Natura2000 sites in Cyprus.
- **Main Goal:** To prevent the extinction of the Griffon Vulture from the island, safeguard the extremely fragile local population, and contribute to its recovery.
 - **Tackling the illegal poison bait use is one of the key actions.**
- Total budget: **€1,375,861** (of which, 60% is funded by EC).
- **Project Partners:** Vulture Conservation Foundation, The Game and Fauna Service (relevant authority), Terra Cypria, and BirdLife Cyprus as the leading beneficiary.

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Creation of a Historical Poisoning Database – One of the anti-poisoning actions of the Project.



- **Poisoning Database: (1996-2020)**
 - **48 (possible and confirmed incidents)** involving wildlife victims as a result of the use of poisoned baits in the countryside.
 - **15 incidents with only poisoned baits** were recorded (without any wildlife or domestic animal victims) .
- **Results from toxicological analyses are available from 2015 -2020 for Cyprus**
 - **45 recorded (possible and confirmed incidents)** involving use of poisoned baits in the countryside only (wildlife & domestic animals).



Mass vulture poisoning incident in 2015
– at least 8 vultures died.



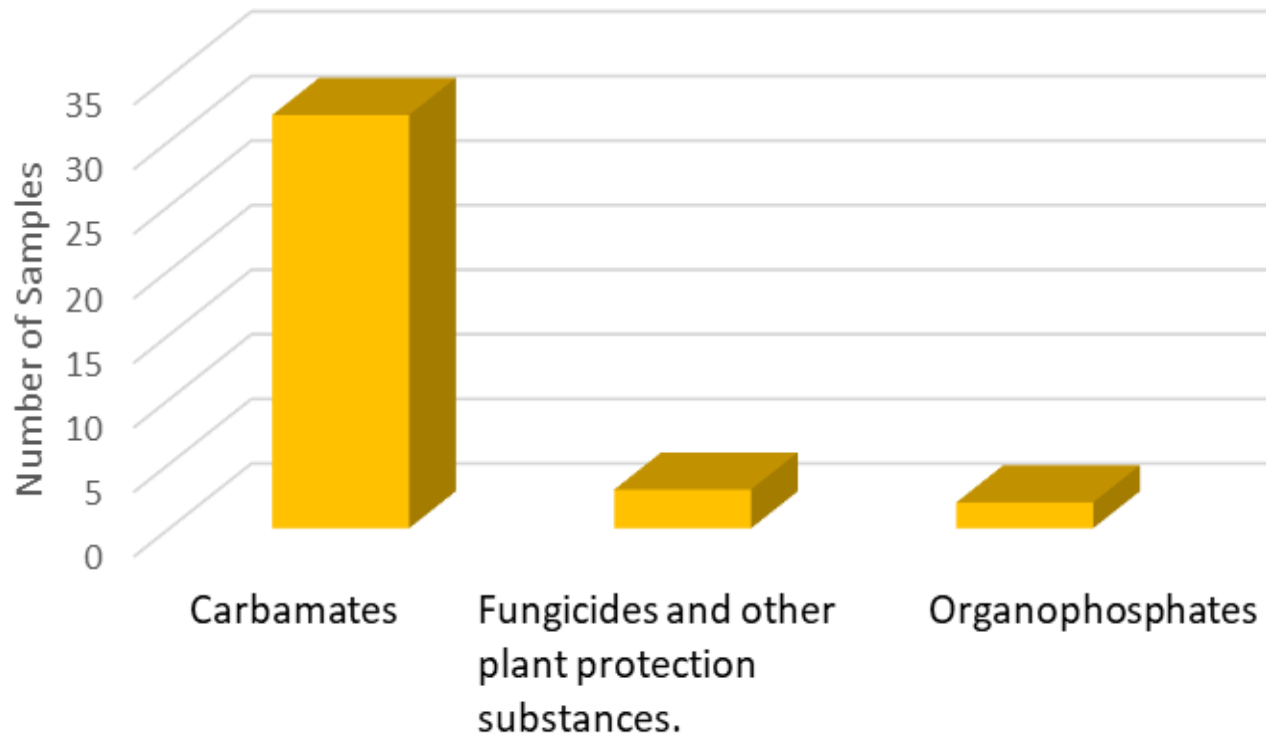
39 of the 45 incidents are confirmed with a total of 63 victims.

- **25 wildlife victims:** 8 Griffon Vultures, 8 hedgehogs, 3 Black Kites, 2 Bonelli's Eagles, 1 Marsh Harrier, 1 Common Buzzard, 1 Red Fox, and 1 Masked Shrike.

14 out of the 16 victims of wild birds are in the Annex I of the Birds Directive.

- **38 domestic animal victims:** 19 dogs, 15 cats, and 4 goats.

Groups of Identified Toxic Substances



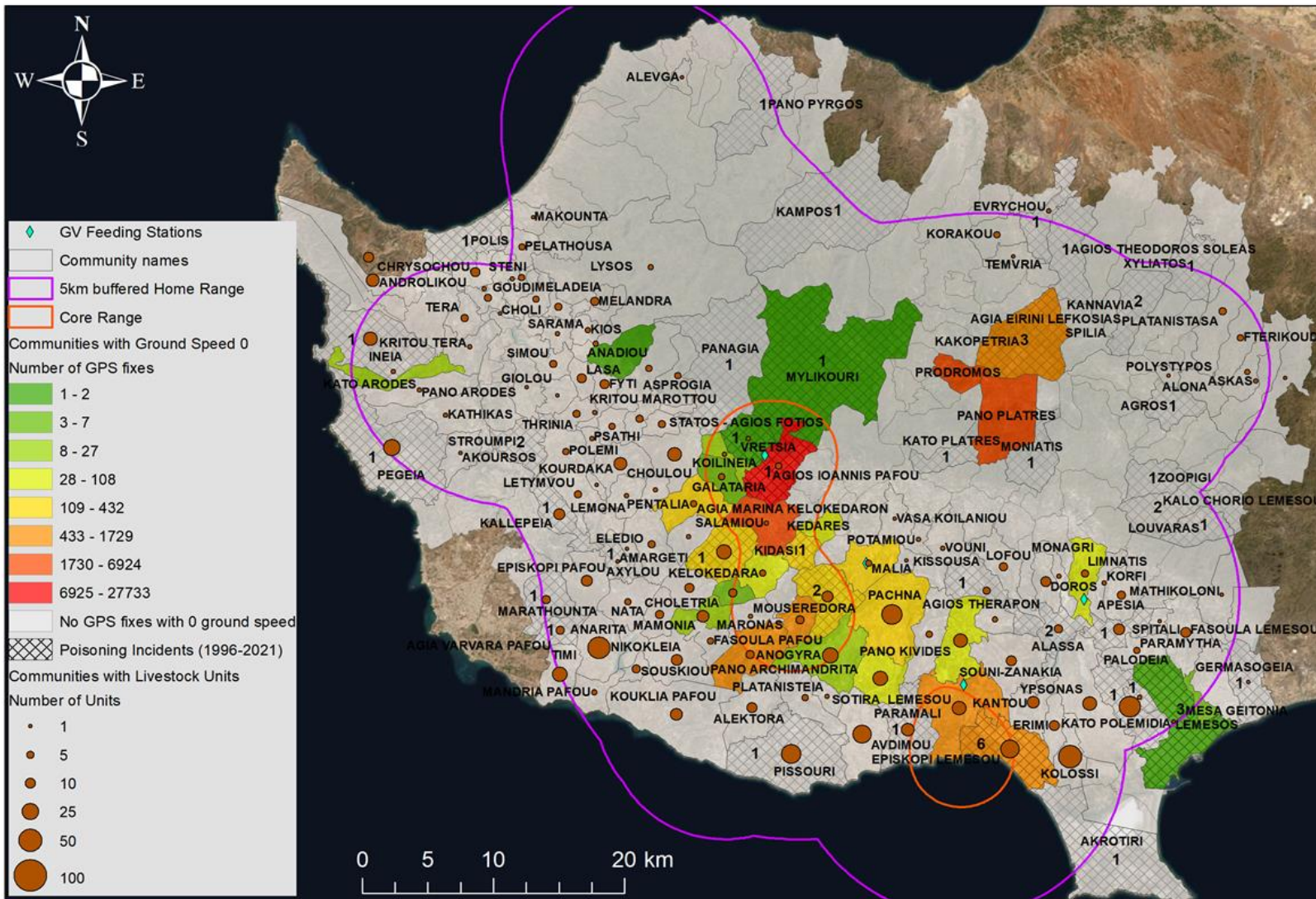
Toxicological analyses conducted for poisoning incidents that occurred in the **countryside** (2015-2020):

- A total of **75 samples** were retrieved.
- Toxicological analyses could be conducted **only for 41/75** of these samples.
- **Toxic substances were traced in 34 of the 41 samples.**
- From these 34 samples: the most common group of substances was **Carbamates** [Methomyl (25), & Carbofuran (7)], followed by **Fungicides** (3), and finally **Organophosphates** (Chlorpyrifos ethyl (2)).

Types of Poisoned Baits: poisoned eggs, meat chunks laced with poison (e.g. pieces of pig skin), poisoned water, whole animal carcasses laced with poison (wild or domestic).



Hot-spots, High-Risk Areas for Poisoning:



Hunting areas

Areas with livestock activity & high density of livestock units.

Agricultural areas (crops)

Areas which are used for hunting dog training!

*The use of poisoned baits is also common in urban areas, where this lethal technique is used to kill cats and dogs

Map showing areas with elevated livestock activity, Vulture GPS fixes with 0 speed (feeding & roosting sites) from September to December, and areas with recorded poisoning incidents over the years.



Gaps in the Chain of Custody, and the administrative framework.

- In Cyprus, no perpetrators have even been found and punished!
- Therefore, no sentencing or persecutions took place!



GAPS:

- The **absence of specially trained Anti-poison Dog Units** (these are already used with success in other EU countries).
- There is also a clear **problem of illegal import, trafficking, trade** and/or use of banned pesticides in Cyprus as well as the **easy access** of the perpetrators to particularly dangerous toxic substances.
- To date, **law enforcement authorities do not proceed in investigation of poisoning cases**. Poisoning is not handled as a wildlife crime by competent authorities, and is low on the agenda.
- Lack of capacity to conduct crime scene investigation (training and staff).

This inaction presupposes the strengthening of environmental knowledge, awareness and training even of the officers of the law enforcement authorities, from the members of the Local Police Stations and the District Police Directorates to the high-ranking executives of the Cyprus Police Headquarters and the Legal Service of the Republic

General lack of environmental education and awareness.

Although illegal, the use of poisoned baits is not considered a crime against wildlife and the environment.

Solutions & Recommendations / relevant project actions:

- **Creation of two APDUs** (will come to action early Spring 2022 as part of the Anti-Poison Actions of the “LIFE with Vultures CY” project).
- **Relevant trainings** in Spain and sharing of know-how (concerning investigation of crime scenes) with leading experts in the field. Training is provided for key stakeholders of the project such as Police officers, Game and Fauna Service wardens, Toxicologists, Veterinarians.
- **Improvement of response procedures** to poisoning incidents through improved collaboration and coordination between involved authorities, i.e GFS – CY Police (achieve this through trainings, policy work, education).
- **National Anti-poison plan** with all stakeholders on board.
- Adoption of preventive measures (ApDUs, resolve conflicts among stakeholders – e.g. hunters, farmers, livestock breeders - deterrents (ApDUs, consistent investigation) - training measures - monitoring measures.





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Thank you!

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