

## VCF Press Release

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14 June 2010

# 3000 km journey for recovery of the griffon vulture population in Bulgaria

### **31 griffon vultures are being prepared for transport from Majorca to Bulgaria**

(*Campanet, 14<sup>th</sup> of June*) Today, after weeks of organisation and preparation, the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) sent 31 griffon vultures from Majorca to Bulgaria. The official departure event was held at 10 a.m. in Mallorca at the Mediterranean Wildlife Conservation Centre, headquarter of the VCF. The vultures are transported by the partner organization from Bulgaria "Green Balkans" in a Mercedes Sprinter (minibus) with a trailer. The route begins by boat from Palma de Mallorca to Barcelona, will continue by land transiting France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and from Serbia arriving to Bulgaria. The journey will take at least two days and two nights, passing around 3000 km of distance! The official arrival event in Bulgaria will take place in Stara Zagora at the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Centre - Stara Zagora (run by Green Balkans) on 17/06/2010 at 11 a.m. These birds are destined for release at four designated areas in Bulgaria comprise of the national park Central Balkan, nature reserves Vrachanski Balkan, Blue Rocks and Kotlenska Stara Planina Mountain.

The 31 vultures that are being provided by the VCF have come from the recovery centres of Extremadura, Castilla y León and the Zoo from Jerez due to the good collaboration between VCF and the local ministries of the Spanish autonomous communities.

This is the second shipment of vultures to Bulgaria after the first one of 18 individuals sent in March 2009. The vultures transported with the first transport are placed in the adaptation aviaries at sites where they adapt to local conditions before being released. The same destiny is awaiting the "new" vultures after their arrival in Bulgaria. The project foresees that within the next 5 years, about 150-200 griffon vultures will be released in Bulgaria.

This activity is within the framework of the LIFE+ project "Recovery of the Populations of Large European Vultures in Bulgaria".

For successful implementation the project foresees activities that will reduce any risks or threats to their lives such as the major threat to this species, the illegal use of poison in the nature. Other activities include providing food on the artificial feeding sites, monitoring of the existing population and of the reintroduced one as well as protecting their habitat.

All this project activities are part of the long-term strategy of the Balkan Vulture Action Plan (BVAP) initiated in 2002 by the VCF. BVAP includes 8 countries and more then 30 local NGOs working on the implementation of the vulture conservation activities.

The main goal of the project is to restore the population of the griffon vultures in the Balkan range whose connectedness will link that population with colonies in Serbia and others in Western Europe. This way, we will create an undisturbed link between Europe, Africa and Asia.

The project is only possible due to the collaboration of the many local and international organisations involved as Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU). Local project partners and implementations of the project are: FWFF-Bulgaria, Green Balkans-Bulgaria, BPPB and BEPF.

For further information please check the [www.balkanvultures.net](http://www.balkanvultures.net)

## CONTACT

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The following photos are available:

- VCF\_vulture collection.jpg (Jovan Andevski, BVAP project coordinator of the VCF and Ivelin Ivano, conservation director of the Bulgarian NGO Green Balkans collect two griffon vultures for the transport)
- VCF\_vulture preparation.jpg (Jovan Andevski, BVAP project coordinator of the VCF with a griffon vulture)
- VCF\_vulture boxes.jpg (31 griffon vultures wait for their transport)
- VCF\_vulture loading1.jpg (Jovan Andevski load the transporter with griffon vultures)
- VCF\_vulture loading2.jpg (Jovan Andevski load the transporter with griffon vultures)
- VCF\_transporter.jpg (31 vultures prepared and ready for their journey to Bulgaria)