

Bulgarians rush to save frozen storks

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People in Bulgaria have been helping distressed storks during a cold snap

What would you do if you came upon scores of distressed storks covered in ice lying in a snow-covered field? In Bulgaria, people have been taking them home.

A [cold snap](#) in the northeast of the country has stranded hundreds of the

migrating birds this week, covering their wings in ice and grounding them.

"I found five frozen storks near the village road the day before yesterday," Safet Halil, 53, from the village of Zaritsa near the town of Dulovo told AFP on Wednesday.

"I took them home, lit a stove to warm them and fed them fish."

The road maintenance worker sparked a wave of support on [social media](#) on Monday and others in the region followed his example, with over 40 birds sheltered inside people's homes, garages or barns.

Experts said that freezing of their wings had forced the birds to spend the night on the ground instead of perched on trees as usual.

"It's the first time that we have seen so many storks in distress in Bulgaria," Hristina Klisurova from the Green Balkans wildlife rehabilitation centre in Stara Zagora said Wednesday.

She nevertheless appealed on public television for people to "avoid taking in just any stork" but only "those who are in a state of distress: injured or with frozen wings" and to also release any saved birds back into nature as soon as possible.



Safet Halil has housed a number of storks he found suffering in the cold weather near his village of Zaritsa

With the spell of high winds, sub-zero temperatures and snowstorms set to continue until the end of the week, Safet said he planned to keep his five companions in for several more days.

"It is minus three degrees Celsius (27 Fahrenheit) today and the weather is getting worse," he said.

Apart from that, the birds have recovered and were doing well.

"I already received two or three beak pinches on the arms," he smiled.

Bulgaria counted in 2016 almost 6,000 inhabited stork nests, around 1,000 more than the previous count 10 years before.

In neighbouring Romania, meanwhile, more than 200 small [birds](#), most of them song thrushes, were found frozen to death this week, Ovidiu Bufnila from the Romanian ornithological society told AFP.

She advised people not to try to catch storks, saying that this would panic them and make them lose energy. Only those that approach need human help, she said.

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