

Spanish vultures released in Cyprus to replenish population

September 28 2022



Griffon vultures are seen in a cage before their release, near the Korfi village in Limassol district in the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2022. Conservationists say 15 vultures flown to Cyprus from Spain have been released into the wild in hopes that they will help revive the local population that has dwindled down to just 8-10 birds because of deliberate poisoning. Credit: AP Photo/Philippou Christou

Some 15 Griffon vultures from Spain have been released into the wild in Cyprus to help revive the east Mediterranean island's population that's dropped to just 8-10 birds because of deliberate poisoning, conservationists said Wednesday.

The LIFE with Vultures CY group said the large birds were initially brought to the east Mediterranean island nation nearly a year ago and stayed in a specially constructed cage to get acclimatized to local conditions before their release.

Cyprus' Game and Fauna Service has attached GPS transmitters to all the vultures to monitor their movements and well-being. From previous releases of vultures elsewhere in Europe, it's expected that the birds will intermingle with the remaining indigenous vulture population at feeding and roosting locations.

Conservationists say restoring the local vulture population to its former numbers remains a long-term goal, with the most pressing issue being to eradicate the biggest threat to the species which is use of poison bait in the wilderness.

A recent study suggested that the species of bird would disappear from Cyprus in about 15 years if nothing was done to eliminate the poisoning threat and replenish the population with vultures brought from abroad.

Another 15 vultures flown in from Spain—which hosts 90-95% of Europe's population of the birds—will be released in Cyprus next year.

The Griffon vulture, which can grow up to 1.2 meters (4 feet) long and have a wingspan of 2.8 meters (9 feet), feeds on animal carcasses.



A griffon vulture flies free after released near the Korfi village in Limassol district in the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2022. Conservationists say 15 vultures flown to Cyprus from Spain have been released into the wild in hopes that they will help revive the local population that has dwindled down to just 8-10 birds because of deliberate poisoning. Credit: AP Photo/Philippos Christou

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