Aegypius monachus -- (Linnaeus, 1766)

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- ACCIPITRIFORMES -- ACCIPITRIDAE

Common names: Cinereous Vulture; Black Vulture; Buitre Negro; Eurasian Black Vulture; Vautour moine

European Red List Assessment

European Red List Status
LC -- Least Concern, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

Year published:	2015
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Assessor(s):	BirdLife International
Reviewer(s):	Symes, A.
Compiler(s):	Ashpole, J., Burfield, I., Ieronymidou, C., Pople, R., Wheatley, H. & Wright, L.

Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)
EU27 regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

At both European and EU27 scales this species has a very large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion (Extent of Occurrence 10% in ten years or three generations, or with a specified population structure). The population trend appears to be increasing, and hence the species does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations).

For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern within both Europe and the EU27.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Georgia; Greece; Italy; Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of; Moldova; Montenegro; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovenia; Spain; Turkey; Ukraine

Origin Uncertain:

Albania

Reintroduced:

France

Vagrant:

Austria; Belarus; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Czech Republic; Germany; Hungary; Latvia; Netherlands; Poland; Slovakia; Switzerland; Gibraltar (to UK)

Population

The European population is estimated at 2,300-2,500 pairs, which equates to 4,600-5,000 mature individuals. The population in the EU27 is estimated at 2,100 pairs, which equates to 4,300 mature individuals. For details of national estimates, see Supplementary PDF.

Trend

In Europe and the EU27 the population size is estimated to be increasing. For details of national estimates, see Supplementary PDF.

Habitats and Ecology

The species inhabits forested areas in hills and mountains at 300–1,500 m. Two different eco-geographical categories occur in Europe: lowland sierras covered by dense Mediterranean maquis (Spain and Greece) and sub alpine forests (Spain) (Hagemeijer and Blair 1997). It forages over many kinds of open terrain, including forest, bare mountains, steppe and open grasslands (Batbayar et al. 2006).

Egg-laying occurs February to April, often in loose colonies or nuclei. It builds a very large (145–190 cm wide, 95–300 cm deep) stick nest, mainly in evergreen oak (*Quercus*) or pine (*Pinus*) in Spain and in Armenia and Azerbaijan mainly in juniper (*Juniperus*). Nesting on rock is extremely rare in Europe. Clutch size is typically one egg (Meyburg and Christie 2014). Its diet consists mainly of carrion from medium-sized or large mammal carcasses, although snakes and insects have been recorded as food items. Live prey is rarely taken (Batbayar et al. 2006). The species is largely resident although some small scale dispersive movements occur in Europe (Hagemeijer and Blair 1997).

Habitats & Altitude

Habitat (level 1 - level 2)		Importance	Occurrence
Forest - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Forest - Temperate		suitable	non-breeding
Grassland - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Grassland - Temperate		suitable	non-breeding
Shrubland - Mediterranean-type Shrubby Vegetation		suitable	breeding
Shrubland - Mediterranean-type Shrubby Vegetation		suitable	non-breeding
Altitude	300-1500 m	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

The two main threats to the species are direct mortality caused by humans (either accidentally or deliberately) and decreasing availability of food. The main cause of unnatural death is the use of poisoned baits for predator extermination (Anon. 2004b), although shooting and destruction of nests also occurs (Anon. 2004b; N. Batbayar in litt. 2005). There are fears that veterinary application of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug Diclofenac, which has caused the near-extinction of several Gyps vultures in India, may have a negative impact on this species (N. Batbayar in litt. 2005). A study in central Spain during 2003-2005 found high concentrations of antibiotics in blood samples from 57% of nestlings tested (Lemus et al. 2008). The same study found two antibiotics in the liver samples of all dead nestlings that were tested. It is hypothesised that antibiotic residues, particularly quinolones, cause liver and kidney damage, and deplete lymphoid organs and alter bacterial flora, facilitating pathogenic bacterial and fungal infections (Lemus et al. 2008). In Europe, decreased food availability was formerly caused by European Union legislation on carcass disposal (Anon. 2004b); however, recently passed regulations will allow the operation of feeding stations for scavengers (A. Brunner in litt. 2010). In eastern Europe, particularly in the former Soviet Union, changes in agricultural practices and human migration from the countryside to the cities have greatly reduced numbers of domestic livestock. In Georgia and Armenia, declines may be linked to the loss of subsidies for sheep-herding in the post-Soviet era (M. McGrady in litt. 2007). Additionally, there have been steep declines in many populations of wild ungulates which provide a major food source for the species. Habitat loss is also thought to be important (Anon. 2004). Outside of Europe, the majority of brood losses occur during the incubation period and it is suspected this may be partially due to low and fluctuating temperatures (Batbayar et al. 2006) and so changes in air temperatures resulting from climate change may be a potential future threat to the species.

Threats & Impacts

Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Agro-industry farming	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion; Ecosystem degradation			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Agro-industry grazing, ranching or farming	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion; Ecosystem degradation			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (intentional use - species is the target)	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			

Threats & Impacts

Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (persecution/ control)	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (unintentional effects - species is not the target)	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Climate change & severe weather	Temperature extremes	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem degradation			
Pollution	Herbicides and pesticides	**Timing**	**Scope**	**Severity**	**Impact**
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

CITES Appendix II. EU Birds Directive Annex I. A European Action Plan for the species was published in 1996 (Heredia 1996). The EU Birds Directive has contributed to the recovery and conservation of the species in Europe, particularly Spain, where the population increased from an estimated 290 pairs in 1984 to a minimum of 1,845 pairs in 2006 (De la Puente et al. 2007). Co-operation between Spanish government agencies and conservationists under the 'Antidote Programme' also appears to have been effective in mitigating the effects of poisoned baits. Both the Spanish and the Andalusian Governments have produced anti-poisoning strategies, but the former still remain to be financially supported while the latter need more decisive official endorsement. A reintroduction project in Grands Causses, southern France has resulted in the establishment of a small breeding population (16 pairs were breeding in 2006 (Eliotout et al. 2007)) with good prospects. Supplementary feeding programmes have been initiated in Spain and France to provide a safe, poison-free food source, although there are concerns that the species may be not very prone to feeding at conventional feeding stations. Captive breeding populations have also been established (Tewes et al.1998). In the Balkans, the species has only one stable colony in the Dadia forest reserve in northern Greece, where WWF has long been involved. Supplementary food is also provided in Bulgaria for breeding birds (Anon. 2007). In eastern Europe, fewer conservation actions are known, although the species occurs within a number of protected areas in the region. The Balkan Vulture Action Plan aims to transfer expertise and technology relating to the conservation of the species from western to eastern parts of Europe (Anon. 2004b).

Conservation Actions Proposed

Survey to determine the species's status and population trends on breeding grounds outside Europe and on wintering grounds (Anon. 2004b). Research threats, particularly the decline in abundance of prey species. Carry out reintroductions to link up the western and the eastern sub-areas of the present range, following the recommendations of IUCN and the Black Vulture Conservation Foundation. Develop the captive breeding programme to support both this and future reintroduction and supplementation efforts. Restore wild rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) populations in the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands (Spain) as this may help to increase food availability, particularly during the breeding period. Promote cooperation and information exchange among people working on the species, both at a national and international level. Strengthen and enforce legislation regulating trade in pesticides that are used to poison meat baits. Increase the rate of prosecution and the severity of judicial sentences for illegal poisoning.

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Map (see overleaf)

Aegypius monachus

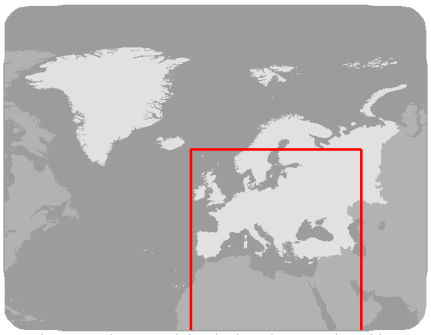
NE | DD | LC LEAST CONCERN | NT | VU | EN | CR | EW | EX

Range

- Extant (non breeding)
- Extant (resident)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds

Map created 05/12/2015



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