

**PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE  
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF  
WILD ANIMALS**

- A. PROPOSAL:** Inclusion of *Neophron percnopterus* on Appendix I
- B. PROPONENT:** European Community and its Member States
- C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT:**

**1. Taxon**

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>1.1 Classis</b>          | Aves  |
| <b>1.2 Ordo</b>             | Falconiformes   |
| <b>1.3 Familia</b>          | Accipitridae  |
| <b>1.4 Genus or Species</b> | <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>  |
| <b>1.5 Common name(s)</b>   | English: Egyptian Vulture<br>French: Vautour percnoptère<br>Spanish: Alimoche común, Guirre |

**2. Biological data**

**2.1 Distribution**

Migratory birds of this species breed in southern Europe from Spain to the Caucasus, central Asia, Pakistan, northern India and Nepal. They winter in areas where they overlap with resident populations. The bulk of the resident population occurs in Ethiopia, East Africa and the Indian Subcontinent, with isolated populations found in the western Atlantic islands, northern and eastern Africa, and Namibia and Angola.

In Spain, its range occupies the Pyrenees, Cantabrian Mountains, Ebro River basin, Iberian System, Andalusian and sub-Andalusian mountain ranges, Sierra Morena mountain range, Tajo river basin, Arribes de Duero, and the Balearic and Canary Islands (Fuerteventura and Lanzarote). The range is determined by the availability of food, which essentially consists of livestock carrions and human waste.

**2.2 Population**

The global population is estimated at 20,000 to 49,999 birds and is in decline (2,600-3,100 pairs in Europe, < 2,000 pairs in central Asia, just a few thousand pairs on the Indian Subcontinent, perhaps 1,000 pairs in the Middle East and perhaps < 7,500 couples in Africa, which gives a total of 30,000-40,000 mature individuals).

An extremely rapid population decline has occurred in India, presumably resulting from intoxication with the anti-inflammatory veterinary drug Diclofenac, to whose effects the vultures are extremely susceptible; numbers detected on road transects declined by 68 % (between 2000 and 2003) and the decline is estimated at > 35% per year since 1999; this is

combined with severe long term declines in Europe (> 50% over the last three generations (42 years)) and West Africa. Resident populations within the continent have also declined, including in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Angola and Namibia (where just 10 pairs remain). Across much of Africa, resident populations are outnumbered by migrant European breeders. Similar declines are reported from the Middle East (50-75% in the last three generations); although in Oman the population is apparently stable and 1,000 birds are resident in a stable population on the island of Socotra).

The European population has declined by over 50% in the last three generations, with a clear downward trend in the population in Spain (the largest in the Western Palearctic and, with some 1,300 pairs, perhaps one of the largest in the world) over the last 20 years (between 1987 and 2000 the range has declined by at least 25%). It is extinct from many provinces in Spain (Almería, Huelva, Murcia, Albacete, Madrid, Ávila and Orense), and in some areas (Ebro River Valley) up to 70 % have disappeared. The breeding population in Aragón has been reduced by half and declines by some 30 per cent have been recorded in Burgos, the Andalusian mountain ranges, and the Canary Islands. The species is listed as globally endangered on the IUCN Red List.

### 2.3 Habitat

Lives in extensive open areas mainly in dry or arid regions, although they are sometimes found on the edge of humid and cold climatic zones; steppes, deserts, scrubland, grassland and cereal fields, and near human settlements. Typically nests on rocky outcrops, although occasionally may also nest in large trees.

The Spanish population is not very selective in its rock-nesting habits; in order to colonize, the birds need extensive, sparsely populated open land, essential to foraging. They shy away from expansive, dense forests and dense scrublands. Otherwise, the species is very ubiquitous. Its occurrence appears to be related to the presence of livestock, although densities stand in no correlation to the abundance of livestock, but rather to the availability of cliffs for nesting.

Communal roosts are formed in woodlands, depending almost exclusively on garbage dumps and livestock carcasses sites supplied by farms and slaughterhouses.

### 2.4 Migrations

Northern breeders migrate mainly in the period March to September. The migratory specimen travel to Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al Mandab.

## 3. **Threat data**

### 3.1 Direct threat

- The vultures are severely affected by poisoning, which has driven its disappearance from many areas of Spain; after years of relative calm in the early 1990s, the use of the poison for predator control in game reserves has increased drastically and many birds have been found dead (i.e. at least 67 birds in the period 1995-98).
- Direct persecution, shooting, destruction and plundering of nests. They are shot dead because they are considered predators or used as trophies.

- Lack of food resources; health regulations stipulating that dead livestock must be buried and the closure of traditional livestock carcasses sites have led to a significant reduction in the amount of food available.
- Collision with built structures such as wind turbines and electrocution on power lines.

### 3.2 Habitat destruction

- Changing environment in feeding grounds.
- Changes in breeding ground conditions and disturbance during breeding.
- Discontinuation of agrosilvopastoral farming and related activities that ensure the availability of potential prey.
- Habitat loss in some areas due to overgrazing by livestock.

### 3.3 Indirect threat

- Alteration of the reproductive system owing to accumulation of toxins (agricultural biocides).
- The effect of Diclofenac on migratory birds on the Indian Subcontinent and in Africa, where the product was found to be on sale in Tanzania and used in many other African countries. On the other hand, antibiotic residue in intensively farmed livestock carrion has led to an increase in fatalities in vulture chicks.
- Diminishing food resources resulting from the downward trend in extensive livestock farming, and the negative effect of the reduced number of carcass disposal sites. The adoption of a European Union regulation on livestock carcass disposal in 2002, for example, has reduced the availability of food resources (largely owing to the closure of traditional carcass disposal sites in Spain and Portugal).
- Population decline has also been driven by loss of wild ungulate populations, and thus their carrion, in rural areas, as well as the loss of small mammals on which the vultures feed directly.
- Pesticide intoxication may also have had an impact in part of its range, and so has lead poisoning from animals shot with hunting rifles.

### 3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

- The lack of food resources and collision with power lines or the effect of wind turbines on their migration routes.
- Changes in the wintering sites and migration flyway.

### 3.5 National and international utilization

- In Morocco, at least, the species is taken for use in traditional medicine.

## **4. Protection status and needs**

### 4.1 National protection status

Listed in the National Catalogue of Endangered Species (Order MAM/1498/2006)

Category: Vulnerable (populations in Spain and the Balearic Islands)

In Danger of Extinction (populations on the Canary Islands)

Listed in the following regional catalogues of endangered species:

- Regional Catalogue of Andalusia: Category: In Danger of Extinction (Act 8/2003)
- Regional Catalogue of Aragon: Category: Vulnerable (Decree 49/1995)
- Regional Catalogue of Asturias: Category: Of Special Interest (Decree 32/90)
- Regional Catalogue of Canaries: Category: In Danger of Extinction (Decree 151/2001)
- Regional Catalogue of Castile-La Mancha: Category: Vulnerable (Decree 33/98)
- Regional Catalogue of Extremadura: Category: Vulnerable (Decree 37/2001)
- Regional Catalogue of Madrid: Category: In Danger of Extinction (Decree 18/92)
- Regional Catalogue of Murcia: Category: Extinct (Act 7/95)
- Regional Catalogue of Navarre: Category: Vulnerable (Provincial Decree 563/1995)
- Regional Catalogue of Basque Country: Category: Vulnerable (Decree 167/1996)
- Regional Catalogue of City of Valencia: Category: Vulnerable (Order of 1 December 2006)

Listed in conservation category B by Law 12/2006 of Catalonia

#### 4.2 International protection status

Listed in Annex I of the directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds; in Appendix II of the Bern Convention; in Regulation (EC) 338/97, CITES Annex A (II) and Appendix II of the CMS.

Outside Europe, many countries have legislation to protect the species, but others do not. Its range often coincides with protected areas, but whose protection measures are not specific to the species.

Monitoring and supplementary feeding programmes and campaigns against the illegal use of poison are in place for a number of national populations. The Indian Government has now banned Diclofenac.

#### 4.3 Additional protection needs

All range states should ratify the Bonn Convention:

- Protect nesting sites where pillaging is a problem.
- Explore the possibility of relaxing implementation of the European Union regulation on carcass disposal to increase the amount of food available to the vultures, while protecting human and animal health at all times.
- Establish supplementary feeding sites where appropriate.
- Raise awareness of the dangers of using Diclofenac for livestock in Africa.
- Effective reduction of exposure to poison through enforcement of the prohibition of poisoned bait use, and through education.
- Lobby for the banning of Diclofenac for veterinary purposes throughout the species' range, and support enforcement of this ban where it has been adopted.
- Where applicable, establish the impact of wind turbines, and lobby for effective impact assessment to be carried out prior to their construction.
- Where appropriate, avoid disturbance by keepers.

## 5. Ranges states<sup>1</sup>

Afghanistan, ALGERIA, ANGOLA, Azerbaijan, BULGARIA, CHAD, EGYPT, United Arab Emirates, ERITREA, SPAIN, Ethiopia, FRANCE, GAMBIA, GEORGIA, GREECE, GUINEA, INDIA, IRAN, ISRAEL, KAZAKHSTAN, KENYA, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, LIBYA, MALI, MAURITANIA, MOROCCO, Namibia, Nepal, NIGER, Oman, PAKISTAN, PORTUGAL, Russian Federation, SAUDI ARABIA, SENEGAL, SOUTH AFRICA, SOMALIA, SYRIA, Sudan, TAJIKISTAN, TANZANIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, TUNISIA, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UGANDA, UKRAINE, UZBEKISTAN, YEMEN.

## 6. Comments from Range States

## 7. Additional remarks

## 8. References

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- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. eds (1992) *Handbook of the Birds of the World* Vol. 2. New World Vultures to Guinea-fowl. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Ferguson-Lees, I. J., Christie, D. A., et al *Raptors of the World – a Field Guide* (2005). Helm Publishing Ltd, London, UK.
- Madroño, A., González, C y Atienza, J.C (Eds.) 2005. *Libro Rojo de las Aves de España*. Dirección General para la Biodiversidad- SEO/BirdLife.Madrid.
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- Catálogo Español de Especies Amenazadas. Ministerio de Medio Ambiente, Medio Rural y Marino (2008).

<sup>1</sup>CMS Parties in Capitals.

