



The reintroduction of the cinereous vulture in Bulgaria – latest results

VULTURES BACK TO LIFE LIFE14NT/BG/649





Presentation outlines

- Project summary and expected results;
- Release methodology;
- Current progress and results;
- Challenges and considerations;
- Future steps;



Project summary and expected results

Duration: 7 years (16.07.2015 – 15.07.2022)

Partners:

- Green Balkans – Stara Zagora;
- FWFF;
- VCF;
- GOBEX;
- EURONATUR;



Project summary and expected results

Direct conservation measures:

- Restoration of the population of Black Vulture in the Balkan Mountains and the valley of Struma River;
- Strengthening the reintroduced population of Griffon Vulture in the Balkan Mountains and the valley of Struma;
- Improving the nesting conditions;
- Improving the food base;
- Limiting the threat of poisoning;
- Limiting the threat of electrocution;
- Stimulating sustainable grazing practices;





Project summary and expected results

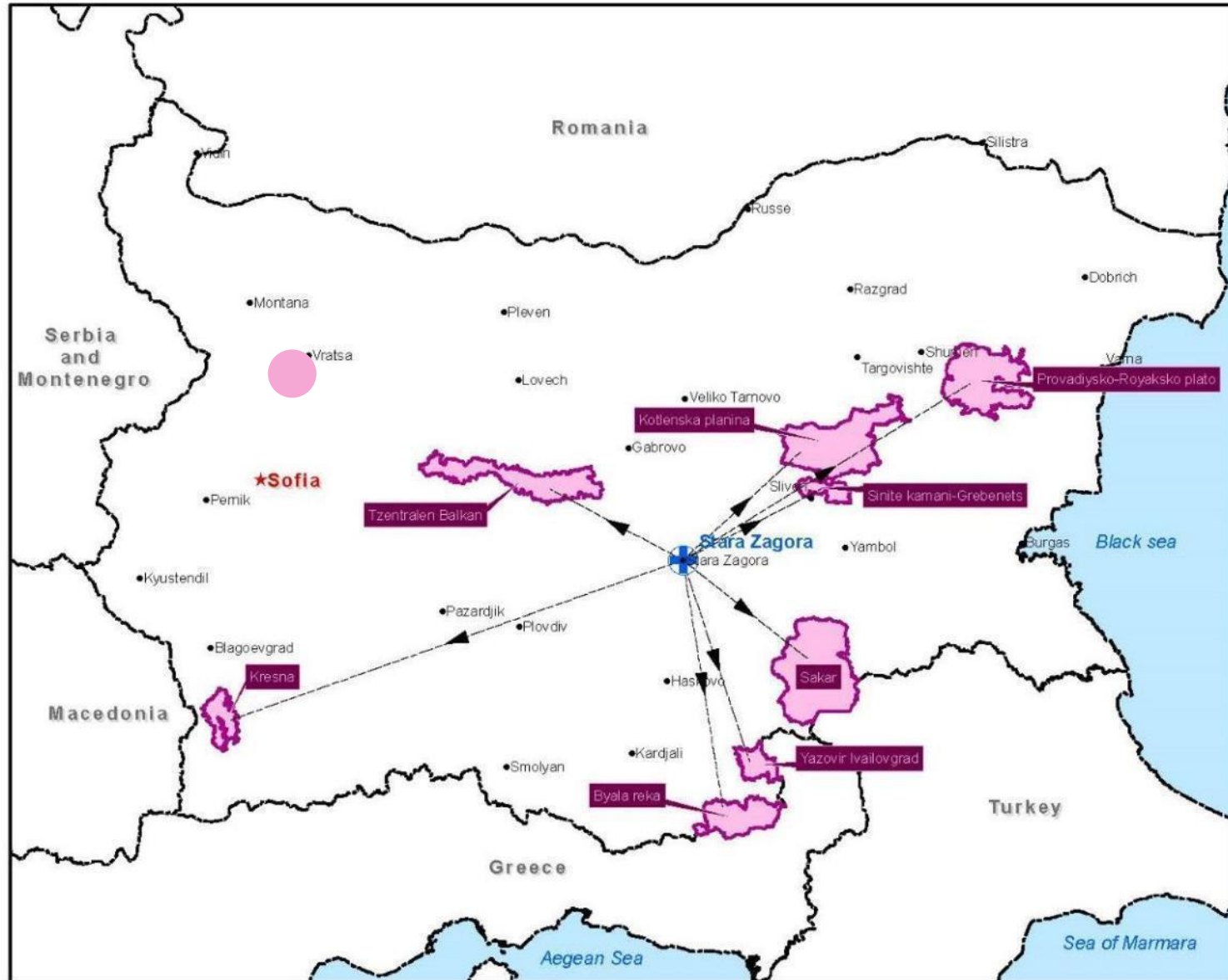
Import, adaptation and release of:

48 Black Vultures, mixture of captive bred (8-10) & wild birds from Spain (from rehabilitation centers Extremadura) (38-40)

- **First attempts for nesting of Black Vultures in the Balkan Mountains and/or the valley of the Struma River;**
- **Fixing of 5-10 Black Vultures in the Balkan Mts and the valley of Struma;**



25^E RENCONTRES VAUTOURS



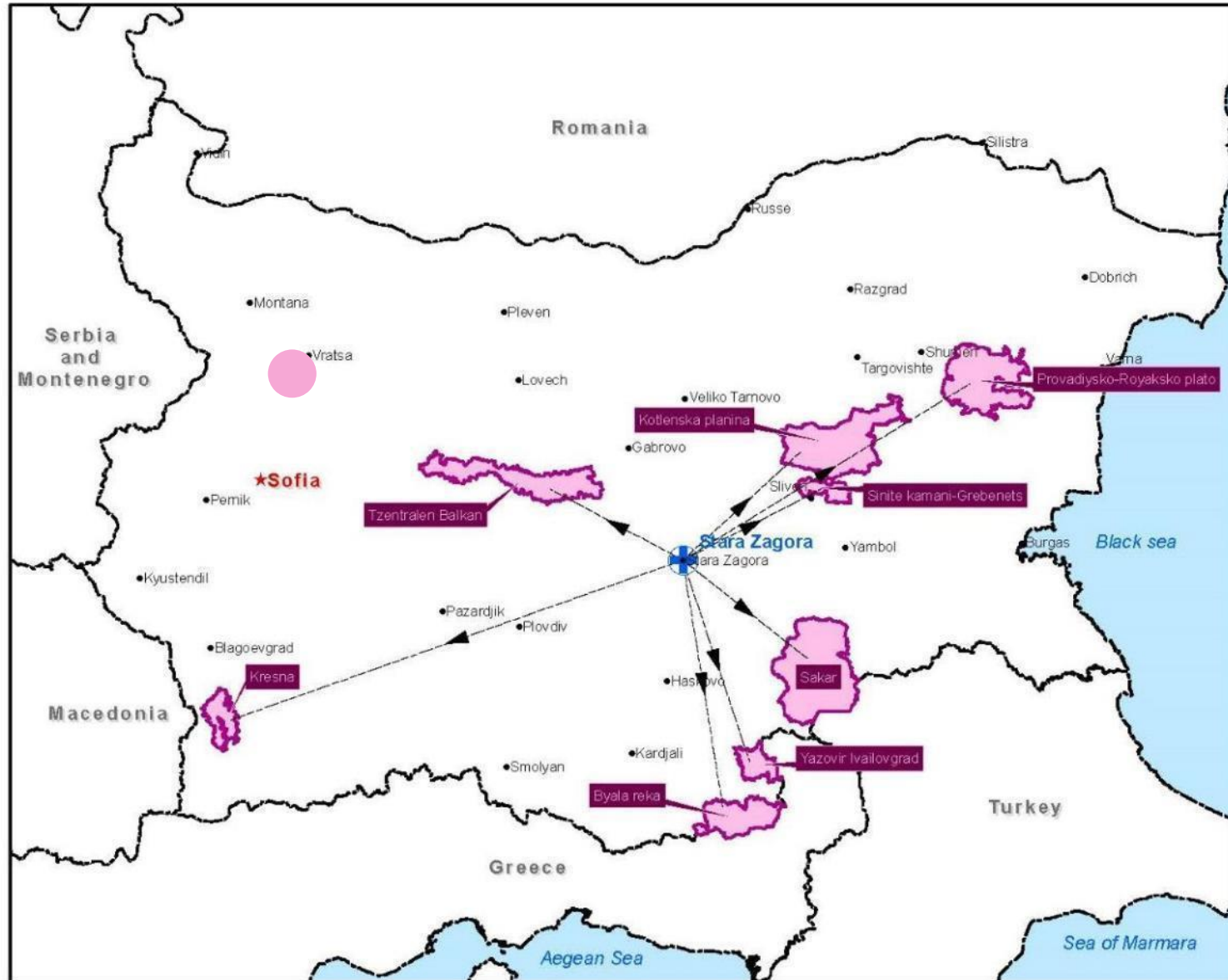
Release methodology

Two main sites of release:

- **Eastern Balkan Mountains (Eastern Bulgaria);**
- Kresna Gorge (possible, initially planned, currently under revision);
- Vrachanski Balkan (Western Bulgaria; additionally added; currently under close revision);



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Archive LIFE13NAT/BG/649



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Current progress and results

Release

Imports	2018	2019	2020
Number of imported BVs (VCF)	12	10	10-15
Captive bred	4	4	0-4
Releases			
Separate hack	3	2	
Aviary hack		2	
Aviary		11	
Mortality			
Confirmed mortality		2	



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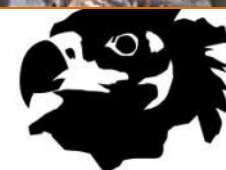


Release methodology

Methods of release:

- **Hacking facility**
 - Separate hack – Kotel - 2018; 2019
 - Hack at the aviary – Sliven – 2019;
- **Aviary**





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Release methodology



Boyan & Ostrava



Kotel release site

Sinite kamani release site

Ostrava:

- Age when hacked: 98 days;
- Duration of stay: 20 days;
- Current state: poisoned January 2019;

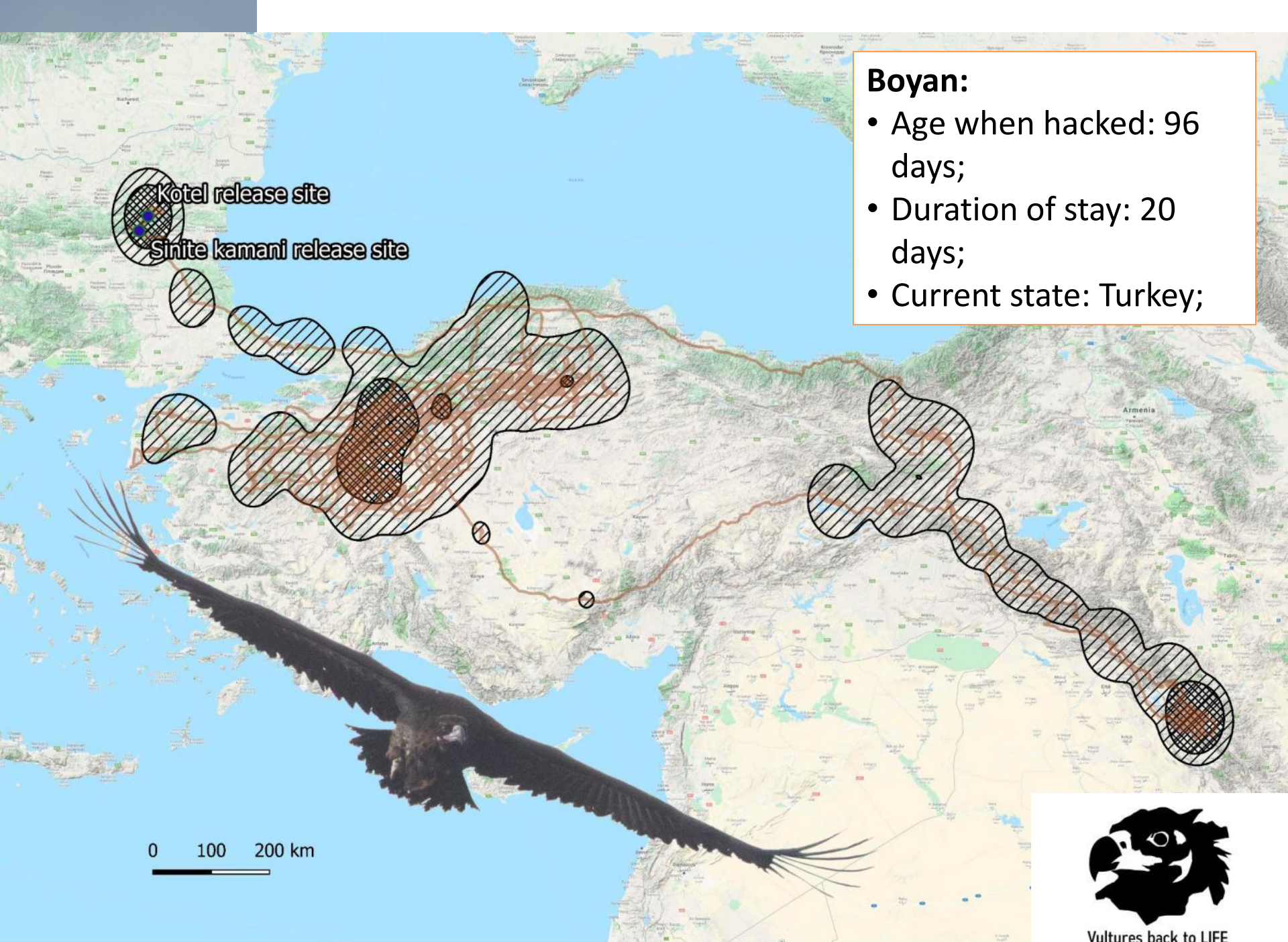


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0 100 200 km

Boyan:

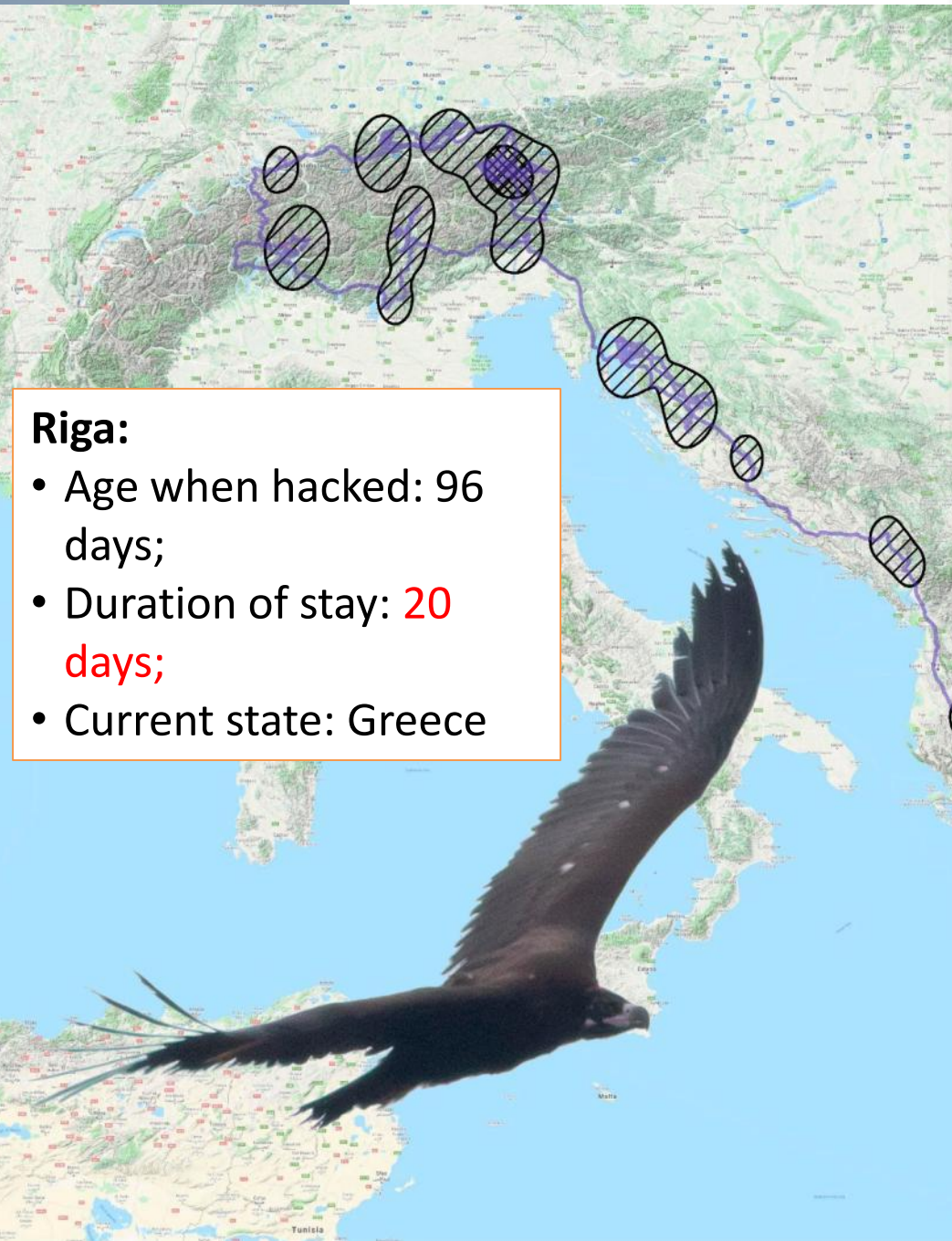
- Age when hacked: 96 days;
- Duration of stay: 20 days;
- Current state: Turkey;



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Riga:

- Age when hacked: 96 days;
- Duration of stay: 20 days;
- Current state: Greece



Kotel release site

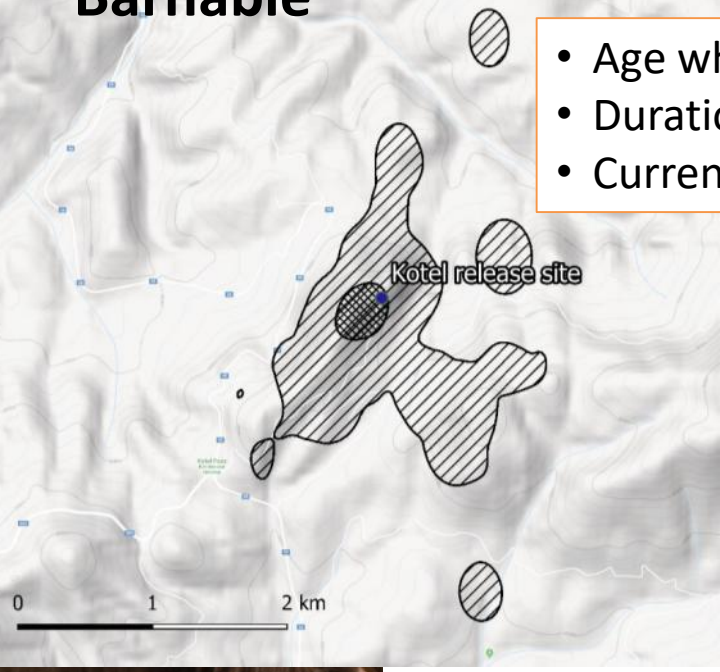
Sinite kamani release site



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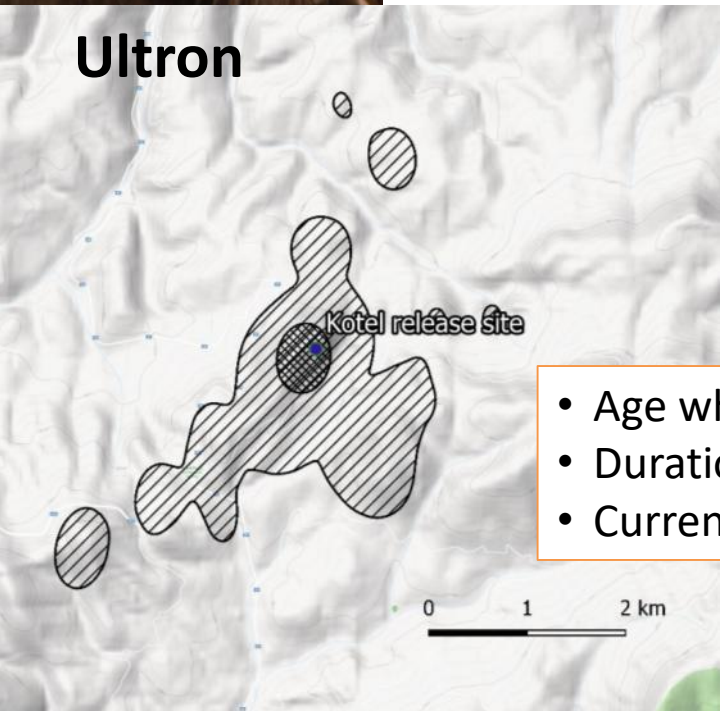
0 250 500 km

Barnabie



- Age when hacked: 92 days;
- Duration of stay: 18 days;
- Current state: on site;

Ultron



- Age when hacked: 96 days;
- Duration of stay: 9 days;
- Current state: on site;



Release methodology





Current progress and results

Zlin:

- Age when hacked: 100 days;
- Duration of stay: 44 days;
- Current state: dead on site;

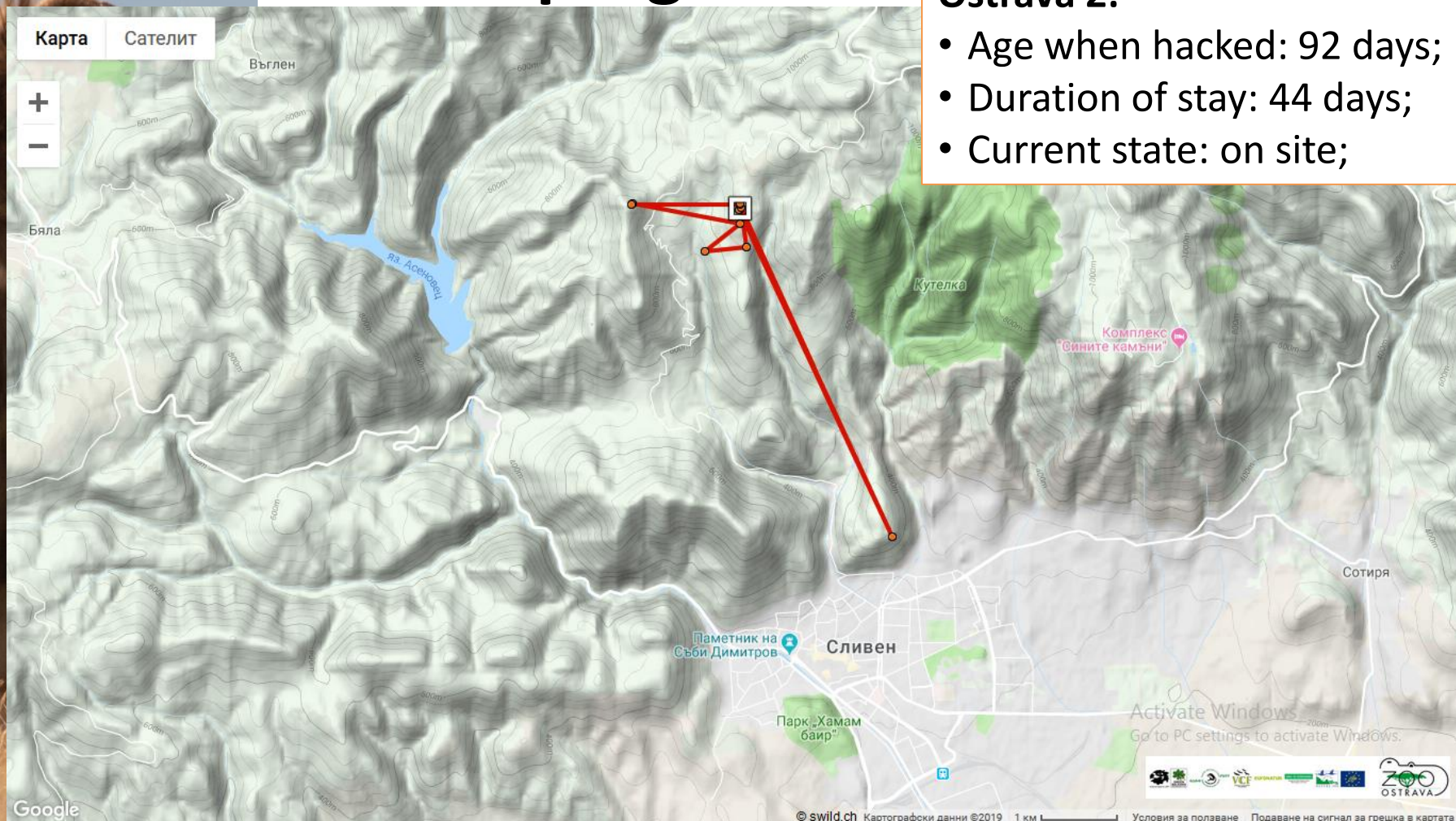




Current progress and results

Ostrava 2:

- Age when hacked: 92 days;
- Duration of stay: 44 days;
- Current state: on site;



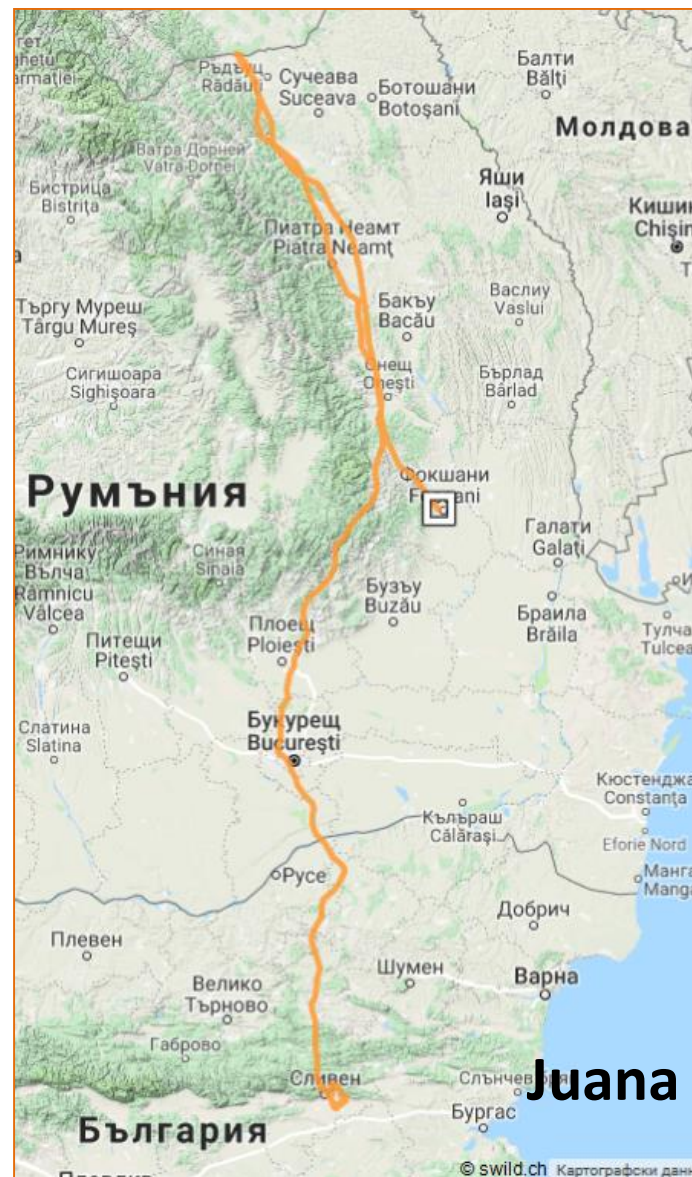
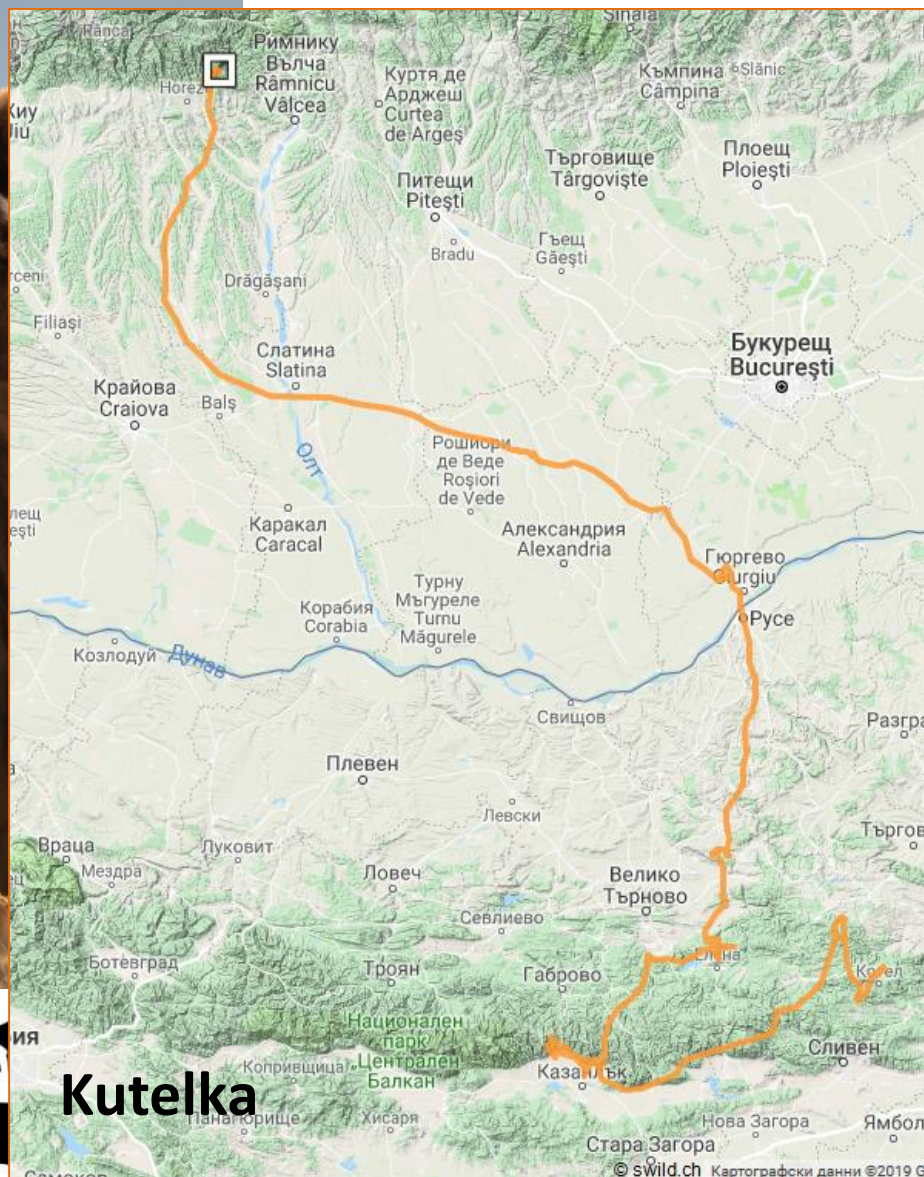
Current progress and results

Adaptation aviary:

Time of release	Number of birds released	Birds
March 2019	4	Kutelka , Zlosten Juana , Balkan
April 2019	4	Kamchiya, Extremadura, VCF- know-how, Marin
May 2019	3	Iberia , Kotel, Sliven
TOTAL	11	



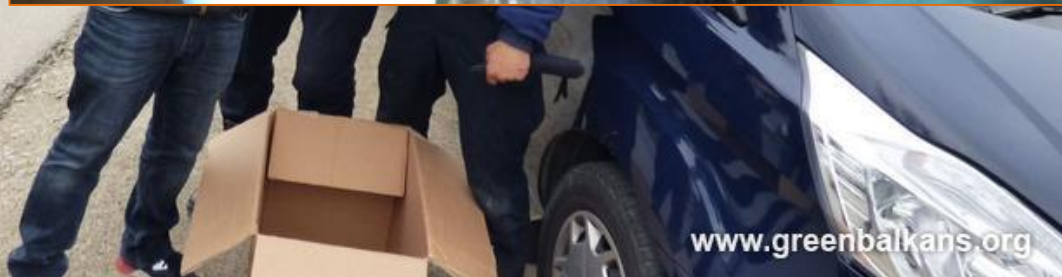
Current progress and results





Current progress and results

Photo: ACDB - Action for wild

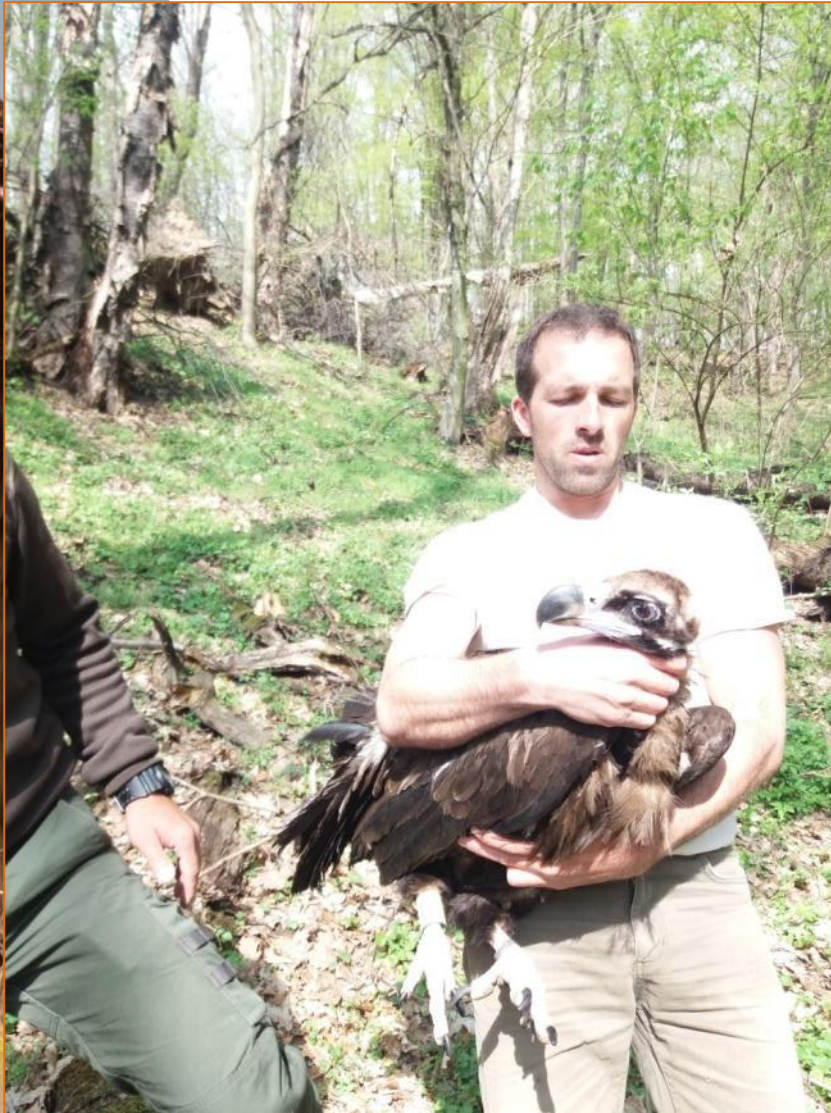


Kutelka

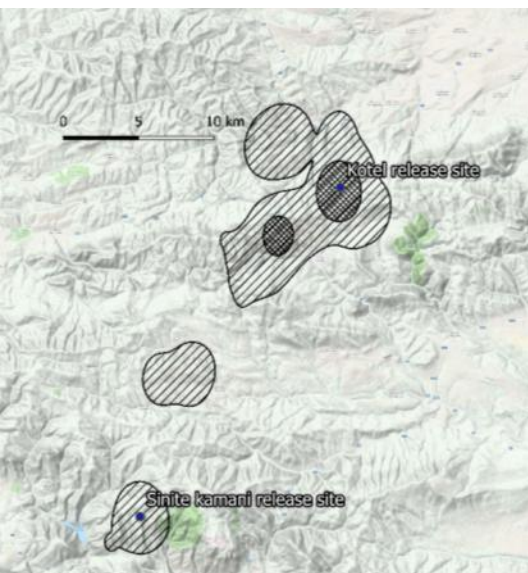


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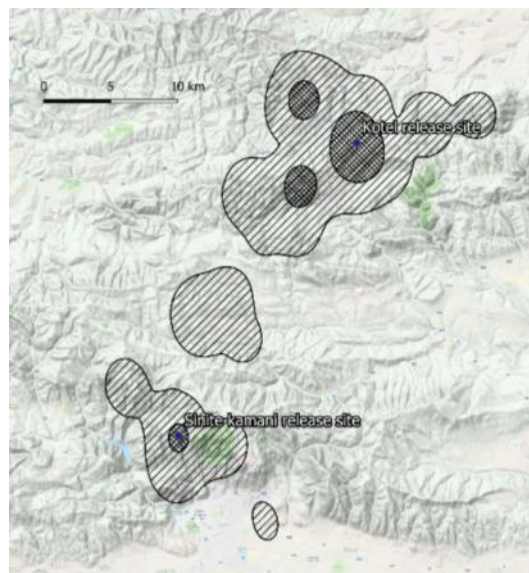
Current progress and results



Juana

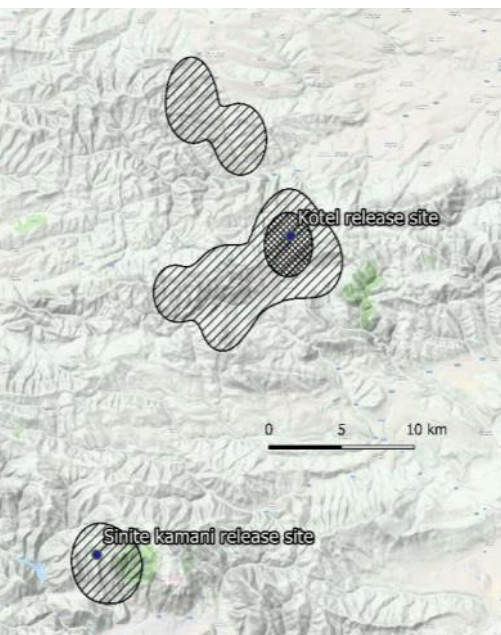


Zlostenski K5

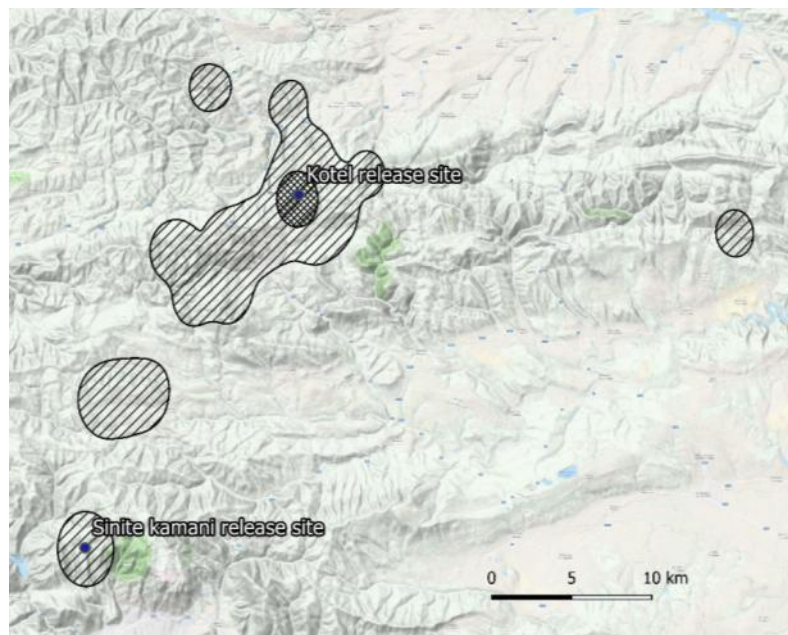


Balkan L5

Kamchiya X2



Extramadura E2



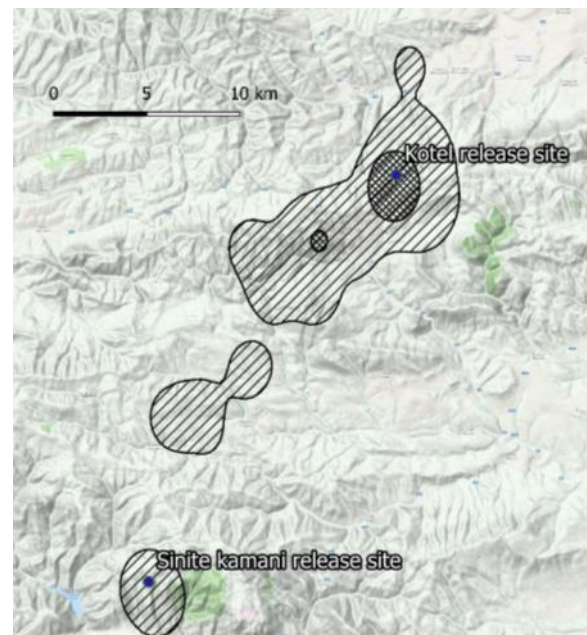
Current progress and results

Soft releases 2019



Photo: Hristo Peshev

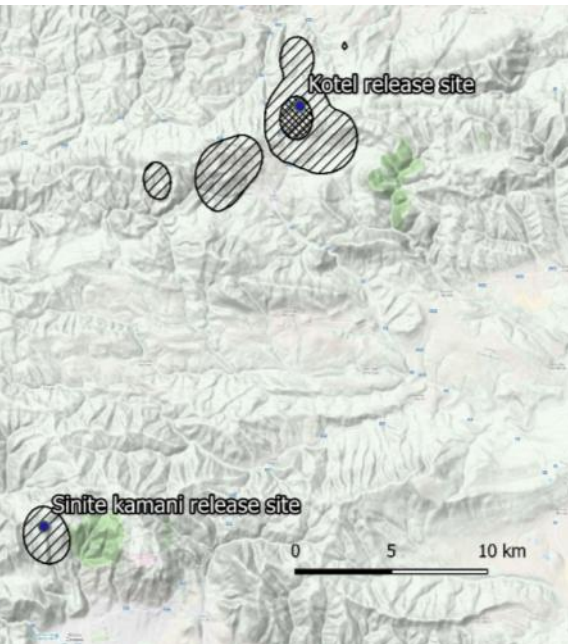
VCF Know-how X3



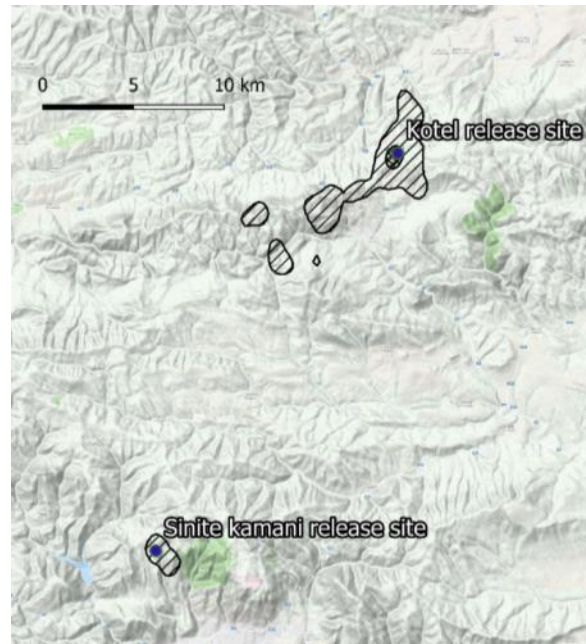


The Cinereous Vultures of Balkan Mountain, August 2019.

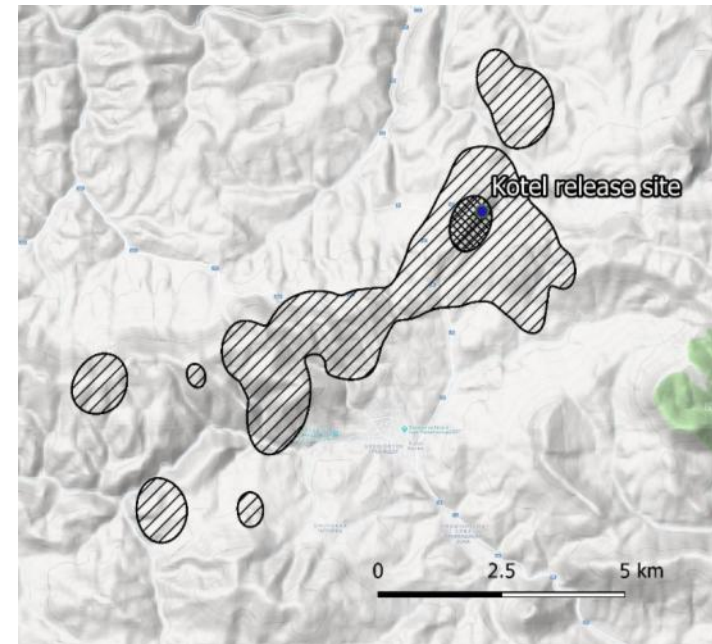
Marina L2



Kotel L2

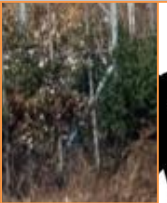


Sliven E5



Hristo Peshev
FWFF

Hristo
FWFF



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Current progress and results

Interesting behaviour of birds released:

- winter wandering October-November;
- perching on sites inaccessible to Griffons;
- never perching on electric pylons;
- feeding inside the hack;
- **courtship behaviour of individual birds;**





Cinereous vulture - a wild specimen in Kotel,
25.03.2019, photo by Lachezar Bonchev/FWFF
LIFE14NAT/BG/649

Challenges and considerations

Photo: Hristo Peshev

March 2017 – Kresna Gorge poisoning:

- 18 Griffon Vulture confirmed dead;
- Suspected casualties: 30 individuals;
- Three consecutive stages of poisoning;
- Very rough terrain;
- Very slow reaction from institutions;
- Perpetrator identified;
- On-going court proceedings;
- **Currently: 50-60 Griffon Vultures on site**



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Challenges and considerations

September 2019 – Iskar Gorge accident:

- 5 Griffon Vulture and a Golden Eagle confirmed dead;
- Suspected casualties: 15 individuals;
- 20 km from roosting sites / Nature Park;
- Immediate reaction and bait detection;
- Immediate reaction from institutions;
- Minister of agriculture involved;
- Poison already confirmed by Bulgarian laboratory;
- Enormous media campaign;
- On-going police examination;





Conclusions

- **Good adaptation and survival rate of Cinereous Vultures released so far;**
- **No major differences of survival and adaptation between release methods (low sample size and early days);**
- Possible to hack up to three birds at once, but should be at same age and accommodated at same time;
- Aviary hack easier to observe, control and maintain;
- All three 2018-hacked birds initiated long-range wanderings in October-November, no common patterns or route;





Conclusions

- **Transmitters are key for following the adaptation;**
- Electrocutation significantly limited following the isolation of several key power lines in release areas;
- **Major threat – poisoning:**
 - Unpredictable;
 - Significantly improved reaction and response;



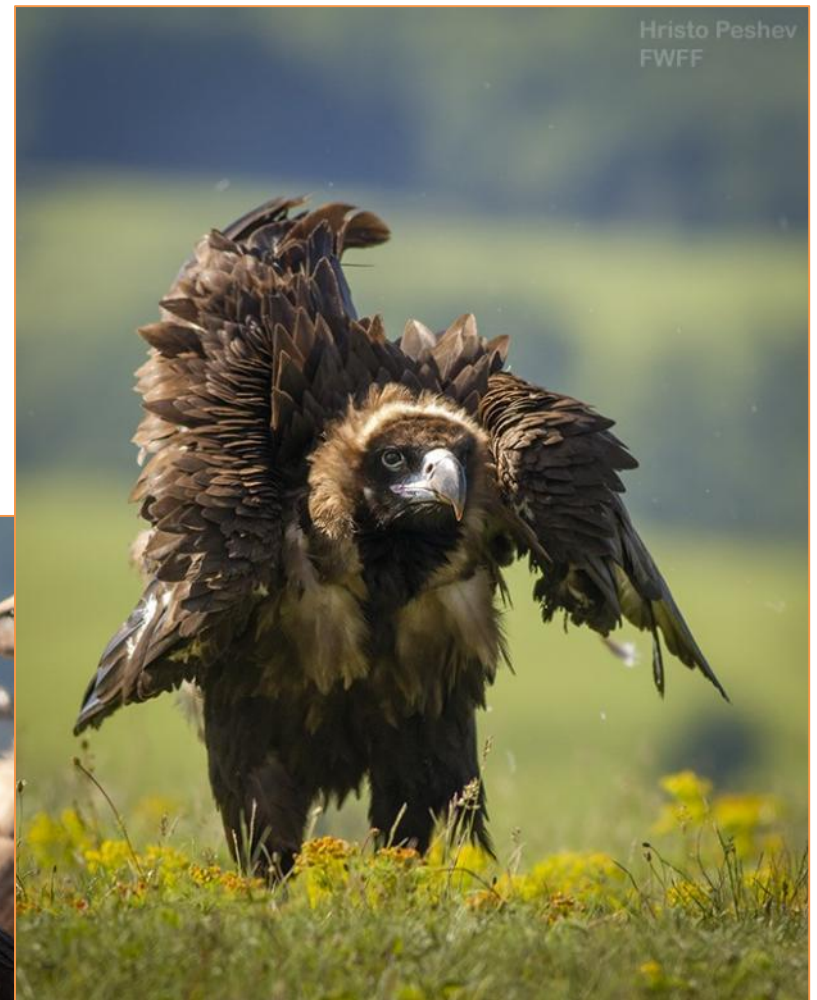
Future steps

- Monitoring on winter movement and survival;
- Transfer of 10 Black Vultures to Vrachanski Balkan release site:
 - Monitoring of the situation;
 - Potential release spring 2020;
- A new batch of 10-15 Black Vultures from Spain / EAZA
 - Release depending on number, age, current situation;
 - Possible delayed release of birds from hacks;



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Merci!



Hristo Peshev
FWFF



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