

Project Update: May 2016



The implementation of planned project activities is going very well. Most of the fieldwork has been done and the analysis of data is currently underway.

Conservation workshops:

Starting from September 2015, three working meetings with stakeholders were organized. Participants in workshops included members of local hunting societies, local environmental NGOs and representatives from the electrical company MEPSO.



During the workshops, using several PowerPoint presentations, I have presented the project, and discussed planned and already implemented activities and measures for conservation of Imperial eagles in Macedonia. All of the participants enjoyed presentation and commented positively. The presentation consisted of an introduction about the eagles, their ecology, threats to eagle conservation in Macedonia, the importance of conservation and the possible role of the participants in future eagle conservation. All workshops were successful as could be seen from the long discussions after each presentation. Each participant received printed informational materials, leaflets and a T-shirt. At the end of each workshop I asked for support and future cooperation.

Nest platforms:

During September 2015, twenty nesting platforms and artificial nests were constructed. Platforms were made from iron tubes and iron net with dimensions and construction suitable for mounting on power lines (80x80 x18cm). Artificial nests were made from

wooden branches and lianas. Local people and villagers were engaged in the construction of wooden nests. This has helped to increase the knowledge of locals about Imperial eagles, but also has had an economic effect, for which the villagers were grateful.



In cooperation with the authorities and workers from electro company A.D. MEPSO – Skopje, platforms with artificial nests for eagles were mounted on the power line pylons during several regular overhauls in October 2015 and April 2016. Five nests will be mounted by the end of project, in September 2016. All actions were attended by journalists from several newspapers and TV stations and new items were published in 26 local and national media outlets.



Here are links to some articles and TV news items:

<http://vecer.mk/makedonija/carskiot-orel-kje-se-gnezdi-na-dalekuvod>

<http://www.sitel.com.mk/platforma-i-gnezdo-za-carskite-orli-vo-blizina-na-shtipskoto-selo-chardaklija>

Surprisingly, four artificial nests were occupied immediately during the breeding season in 2016. Two nests are occupied by Imperial eagles and other two by Ravens. This proves that the lack of breeding opportunities is a significant issue, but also that the artificial nests are really well constructed and acceptable to the birds.



This first success encourages me to proceed with the placing of more nesting platforms which I hope will help to increase the population of Imperial eagles, and also with other birds that nest on power lines.

Public educational lectures:

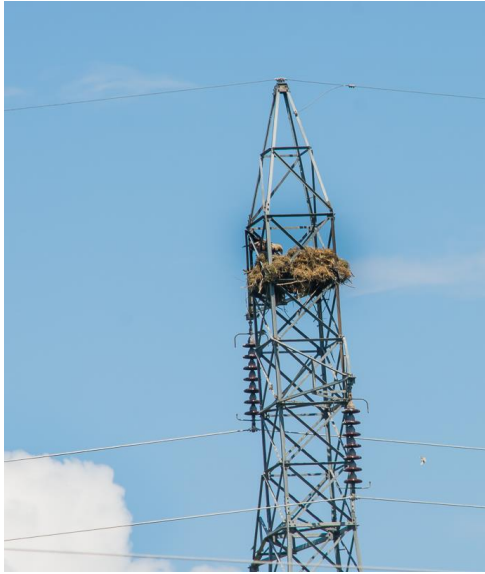
Public conservation lectures (six lectures) were also conducted in villages in the Ovce Pole region (central steppe part of Macedonia), which have helped in identifying local people interested in joining monitoring activities and becoming responsible for specific territories. The same information shared with workshop participants was also provided to the general public.



Experience from the data gathered in the IE project has proven that the local inhabitants can have key role in the conservation of Imperial eagles. They can provide valuable information on threats, and also take on the role of providing food and helping with nest guarding. Efforts were made to motivate the general public to contribute towards Imperial eagle conservation. Several more lectures will be carried in different villages in the coming weeks.

Monitoring of the breeding pairs and their breeding success:

During the monitoring mission, all known sites in the region of Ovce Pole and Povardarie have been monitored for the presence of birds, and every pair has been monitored since the start of the breeding season. The research began in mid-February 2016. During the field survey more than 600.000 ha of the steppe region were explored. Monitoring was done directly on the nests of the Imperial eagles (the location of all current and historical nests is well known to my team) from a safe distance (using telescopes and binoculars) to prevent any disturbance of the birds. In 2016, twenty six couples were formed of which twenty three have bred. Fifteen nests are on trees and the other eight are on power line pylons.



Seventeen couples have one chick and six have two chicks in the nest. Monitoring activities and nest guarding will continue until the end of the breeding season.

Nest guarding:

Even though the project started in late July 2015, I decided to try early (at the beginning of July 2015), the idea of the inclusion of local livestock breeders (shepherds) in guarding the nests. I chose the vulnerable nest close to Mamutcevo village and engaged a local shepherd from there. After a short training I lent him a pair of binoculars and provided him with a postpaid phone credit card for a mobile phone. The results were highly encouraging. As well as guarding the nest, the shepherd provided a lot of useful and important information about what happens around eagles nest and in the hunting territory of a couple during the whole season.

Five nests this season are vulnerable and need to be guarded.



Three of the most vulnerable nests (two seen on the image above), have been guarded from the middle of May because of the poor condition of the trees and possibility collapse or destruction by bad weather. The guards are two shepherds and one farmer, as was planned from the beginning of the project. Another two nests will be guarded by volunteers from the second half of June until the end of July (or as much as is deemed necessary).

More details and photos of each action will be presented in the final report.

