

THIS GRIFFON VULTURE IS ALIVE
BECAUSE IT CAME ACROSS A DEAD ANIMAL



THIS GRIFFON VULTURE IS DEAD
BECAUSE IT CAME ACROSS "HUMAN VENOM"

PROGETTO LIFE

Antidoto



A new strategy against the poisoning
of large carnivores and scavenger raptors



WHY POISONING?

Illegal poisoning is a common practice in many European countries, directly and indirectly causing the deaths of thousands of wild animals of different species, as well as thousands of dogs and cats.

POISONING IS A THREAT TO WILD ANIMALS AND PETS AND A PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

Some use poison thinking they are defending their livestock against predators such as foxes and wolves, while others are trying to defend game species such as pheasants and hares against predation by foxes and birds of prey. In some parts of Italy, poison is used against bears to protect crops against marauding, and even to kill competitors' dogs in the chase for truffles.

Another common practice is to use poison in urban areas to wipe out colonies of feral cats or more often just to get rid of the neighbour's cat or dog, guilty of "causing a nuisance".

POISONERS COMMIT SERIOUS CRIMES THAT ARE CRUEL AND DON'T EVEN WORK

It has been clearly shown that trying to wipe out territorial predators is a waste of time:

if a fox dies, then a territory becomes free, and a new fox soon arrives to occupy it.

So it is far better to use livestock protection systems such as electric fencing, shelters, guard dogs, etc., measures which are often subsidised in protected areas.

Defending one's own livelihood is a legitimate concern, but it is not legitimate to do so by breaking the law, indiscriminately exterminating animals, and endangering public health. Farmers, sports associations, environmentalists and trade associations are all aware of the dangers of poisoning, and are ready to lend a hand to stamp out this illegal practice.





POISONING AND ITS VICTIMS

POISONING KILLS INDISCRIMINATELY AND CAUSES UNSPEAKABLE SUFFERING

Poisoning is not selective: it kills without distinction. It kills dogs out for a walk with their owners, as well as a huge number of protected animal species, large and small, rare or otherwise: bears, wolves, foxes, various birds of prey, but also hedgehogs, badgers, squirrels and even toads. Only a tiny percentage of the animals which die of poisoning are ever found, so the true nature of the massacre is seldom clear.

POISONING IS A SILENT MASSACRE OF UNKNOWN MAGNITUDE



Poison is put out in the form of bait, mixed in with meat or other appetizing foods, or even spread over animal carcasses which are then left out in the open to attract carrion eaters.

Any animal which eats the poisoned bait is destined to die a slow and unbearably painful death, and then itself in turn becomes a fatal trap for other carrion-eaters.

Thus begins a frighteningly unstoppable chain of death.



There are many different substances used to make poison bait, and some of these are easy to purchase on the open market (snail pellets, rat poison and various pesticides), and others on the black market.

Even though sales have been banned in Italy for many years, strychnine is still used - just 15-30 mg of this powerful poison are enough to kill an adult human. Poisons cause acute intoxications, leading to neurological symptoms, haemorrhages and gastrointestinal disorders. Some have an immediate effect, while others cause a slow and painful death. Strychnine causes convulsions and muscular contractions followed by a rapid death through asphyxia, the victim remaining conscious throughout. A terrible way to end a life.

SOME VICTIMS OF POISONING IN ITALY

MARSICAN BROWN BEAR

The Marsican Brown Bear is an endemic subspecies restricted to the Central Apennines of Italy, with a tiny population of just 30-40 individuals found in Abruzzo, Molise and Lazio. Poisoning can have a devastating effect on its conservation, adding to the many other threats, such as new roads and encroaching human settlements.



WOLF

The wolf is one of the species most affected by poisoning. Often wrongly accused of killing livestock (where the real culprits are packs of stray dogs), wolves have somehow miraculously managed to survive centuries of persecution by taking refuge in inhospitable mountainous areas. Even though they are a protected species, it is estimated that on an annual basis up to 15-20% of the population is killed illegally, either through poisoning or shooting.



BLACK KITE



RED KITE

Poisoned bait and animal carcasses are a fatal attraction for these two Kite species. Poisoning has been the main cause for the recent drastic fall in the German, French and Spanish populations, countries which still have the highest numbers of these magnificent birds of prey.

The Bearded Vulture is a majestic vulture which specialises in eating bones, and like all scavenger raptors, is very sensitive to poisoning. Whereas the reintroduction programme in the Alps has been a success, in 2008 in Sardinia all three young Bearded Vultures were poisoned within a few months of their release in a similar reintroduction programme.



BEARDED VULTURE



GRIFFON VULTURE

The archetypal vulture, the first to arrive at large mammal carcasses to feed, the Griffon Vulture is both the victim and the "sentinel" of poisoning. Once found throughout the Italian peninsula and the major islands, the Griffon Vulture has survived with tiny populations in Abruzzo, Friuli, Sicily and Sardinia thanks to reintroductions and restocking with Spanish birds. Both Abruzzo and Sardinia have seen periodic episodes of poisoning, but it is the Sardinian population which is hit on a regular basis. In the Pollino National Park in Calabria, a reintroduction programme was hit hard in 2004, with the poisoning of the 12 vultures released there.

The Egyptian Vulture, the smallest and most "attractive" of the European vultures, is on the verge of extinction in Italy. Having disappeared from central Italy several decades ago, the Egyptian Vulture now has a breeding population of 7 pairs in Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily. At a European level, the population is in severe decline, losing over 50% of its numbers

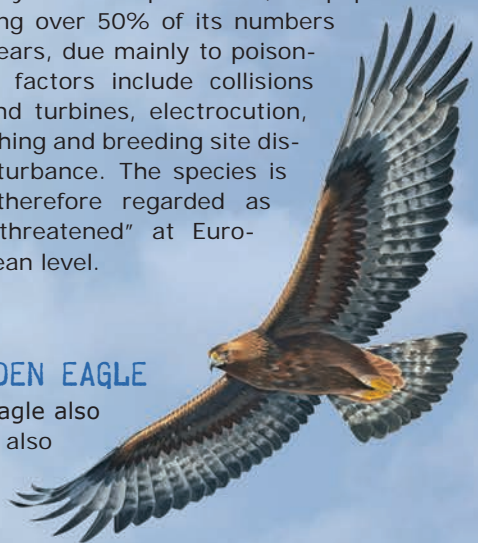


EGYPTIAN VULTURE

over the last 40 years, due mainly to poisoning. Other factors include collisions with wind turbines, electrocution, poaching and breeding site disturbance. The species is therefore regarded as "threatened" at European level.

GOLDEN EAGLE

Magnificent ruler of the skies, the Golden Eagle also feeds on large mammal carcasses, while also preying on small and medium-sized animals. So it is hard for this splendid animal to escape from poisoning.





Anti-Poisoning Dog Units are a great innovation, and have been very effective in fighting the illegal use of poisons. They are one of the cornerstones of the ANTI-DOTO LIFE project. Dogs are a great help to Man in many emergencies and other situations involving risk. Their outstanding sense of smell

has long been used to look for people trapped under earthquake-hit buildings or avalanches, for drugs and explosives and even for smuggled foodstuffs. After a long, carefully-designed training process, some dogs can learn to recognise in the wild all of the toxic substances used in poisoned bait or in carcasses.

THE ANTI-POISONING DOG UNITS

There are two anti-poisoning dog units working in the Gran Sasso National Park: one is made up of three dogs, accompanied by a Park dog-handler, while the other has two dogs handled by a forest ranger who is a member of the Environmental Co-ordinating Service (CTA) of the Italian Forest Service.

The two nuclei were formed thanks to help from the Junta de Andalucia which trained and donated the five dogs to the Park, as well as training the two dog-handlers in fieldwork and in the techniques needed to keep the dogs in top condition.

DOGS FROM THE ANTI-POISONING UNITS CAN FIND ANY TOXIC SUBSTANCE

The dog units are taken out by their handlers on specific missions, whenever reports of suspect bait or carcasses are received, as well as on preventative missions throughout the Park. Once a poison bait or poisoned carcass is found, the dogs let the handler know, and at that point the CTA officers take over, taking a sample of the suspect material, and conducting an investigation together with the park veterinarian, with the help of health and legal authorities.

THE DOG UNITS WORK 365 DAYS A YEAR CARRYING OUT ROUTINE AND EMERGENCY INSPECTIONS

On the "scene of the crime", the Park's CTA team, which was created through a specialist course, follow a specific operational protocol written by experts from the IZSLT disease control agency (Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Regioni Lazio e Toscana), from the Park and the Italian Forest Service.





DOG UNITS - COMBATING POISONING THROUGH CLOSE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARK AND THE ITALIAN FOREST SERVICE

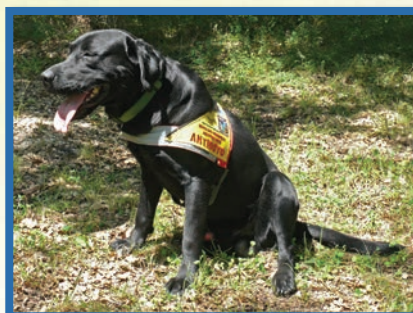
The dogs (Malinois Belgian Shepherds, Labradors and Border Collies) are kept in training throughout their career, and this - together with their strong bond with their handlers - is the secret behind their successes in this tough but delicate task.

The project has also set up a canine unit made up of five dogs which will be operating in the Aragona region of Spain.

OTHER ACTIONS UNDER THE ANTIDOTO PROJECT

In Italy, ANTIDOTO will also be:

- drawing up a strategy against poisoning, in order to assess the phenomenon and propose prevention and control measures, especially as regards investigations and forensic science, which play a key role in identifying the culprits;
- communicating the Strategy and the activities of the Anti-Poisoning Dog Units by distributing a technical manual and holding a convention;
- raising awareness among the local population in the Park area, with specific meetings, school visits and information leaflets.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A SUSPECT CASE OF POISONING

- Phone the Italian Forest Service on 1515 as quickly as possible.
- Do not touch the carcass or bait, as it could be dangerous.
- Leave the scene of the crime as intact as possible (do not smoke, do not touch or move anything, avoid treading nearby).

The ANTIDOTO LIFE Nature project introduces innovative measures against the illegal use of poisons. The project lasts 5 years (Jan 1st 2009-Dec 31st 2013) and has a budget of €1,411,144 which is co-funded 50% by the European Commission.

The coordinating beneficiary is the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park (Italy) and its two partner institutions are the Junta de Andalucía and the Gobierno de Aragón (Spain).

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The Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park

The Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park is the second biggest in Italy in terms of area, covering around 150,000 hectares in the central southern Apennines where the Abruzzo, Lazio and Marche regions meet. It is lucky enough to benefit from a favourable geographic position, which gives it a wide variety of habitats and outstanding biodiversity. The northern end of the Park (Monti della Laga) is made up of sandstones and marls, and is thickly wooded with plenty of rivers and waterfalls. The southern end (Gran Sasso), by contrast, is characterised by rocky limestone peaks, glacial morphology and upland meadows; here we find the highest mountain in the Apennines, the Corno Grande at 2,912 m, and the Calderone, the southernmost glacier in Europe. The flora of the area is outstandingly rich, with over 2,400 species, including various endemic species on the upland pastures and limestone scree slopes. The cliff faces are the breeding habitat for the Peregrine Falcon, the Lanner Falcon and the Eagle Owl. The upper slopes provide the perfect habitat for the European Snow Vole, as well as for birds such as the Snow Finch, the Rock Partridge, the Rock Thrush, the Alpine Chough and the Red-billed Chough.

This huge pristine environment provides the ideal habitat for rare mammals such as the Apennine Chamois, and for mammal and raptor species that are particularly vulnerable to poisoning, such as the Wolf, the Marsican Brown Bear, the Golden Eagle and the Griffon Vulture.



Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park

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*Product created with the contribution
of the Life financial instrument
of the European Commission*

Design, graphics and illustrations by Nicola Cillo.
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English text by Anthony Green. Photos by Guido Ceccolini,
Anna Cenerini, Erik Torrico, Sherekan33.
Thanks to the Abruzzo Lazio and Molise National Park
for allowing us to use images of the wolf and bear.

Eukanuba

supports the ANTIDOTO project by supplying food
for the dogs of the Anti-Poisoning Dog Units free of charge