For many years the Wildlife Rescue Centre of Green Balkans has been a partner of the Ministry of Environment and Waters in the actions for preserving the wildlife of Bulgaria.

I would like to thank the team of the Centre for their hard work, well and devotion in what we can easily call their vocation - rescuing the wounded nature of Bulgaria.

Your work is important to our society not only because of the hundreds of rescued wild animals and all your efforts in returning species gone extinct from the Bulgarian nature, but also because of your educational work and the thousands of children who visit the Centre. The example of good attitude towards wild animals they find here helps their development into friends of wildlife.

I wish you good spirit, strong will and health, so you can easily overcome the difficulties you encounter towards our common goal - the preservation of Bulgarian nature!

Ivetina Vasileva
Minister of Environment and Water

Team

The team of the Wildlife Rescue Center is diverse, colorful and dedicated to their work. Electricians, engineers, ecologists, veterinarians, biologists, linguists – a whole range of people of various professions and qualification, united by their love for nature.

Rusko Petrov – Operational Manager of the Wildlife Rescue Center. Veterinarian. Supplies Coordinator. Patients Admittance and Intensive Care Unit

While Rusko keeps the balance between institutions and the team, Rusko keeps the balance between the team, Ivaylo, and the rest of the activities is monitored by Green Balkans. As a long-time volunteer at the Rescue Center, Rusko has gained experience in many of the activities of the Organization, Rusko finds the most appropriate way to "keep things going". Besides being an Operational Manager, he is one of the veterinarians at the Centre, in charge of supplies, and his greatest passion is working with volunteers.

Ivaylo Klisurov – Manager

He is the person of the longest experience at the Rescue Center. He has passed through all the levels of work at the facility. He started as a laborer, to continue as an animal keeper, a technician, a caretaker, and reach his current position – Manager of the Rescue Center. With the experience acquired over the years, Ivaylo Klisurov is able to find the best solution for the team of the Centre and the institutions, the donors, and the foreign partners.

Hristina Klisurova – Veterinarian. Public Relations and Document Flow Coordinator

Hristina is the person processing more than 80% of all signals sent to the Rescue Center, she is responsible for the "own production", for the project "Lesser Kestrel Recovery in Bulgaria". Her efforts have demonstrated her hard work and dedication, demonstrated through his diligent performance and perseverance, he was invited to join our team as part of the project "Saker Falcon Return to Bulgaria". The good results achieved during the last year’s breeding season of the Saker Falcons were made possible thanks to his efforts. He also assists with the update and maintenance of the databases and the reception of visitors, and for some time now, he has been training birds to be presented to the audience.

Ivanka Lazarova – Veterinarian. Baby Work and Intensive Care Unit

Ivanka is the person dealing with all the patients received at the Rescue Center. She is in charge of reception, treatment, rehabilitation, and release of all feathered and furred residents of the facility. Moreover, she helps with the processing of all details of wildlife in distress, preparation of documents, disallowing of the work shift schedule, working with volunteers, and transportation of patients.

Nikolay Arabadzhiev – Inpatients and Intensive Care Unit

He is the man under whose leadership the old base of the Rescue Center became tidy, clean and a nice place for visitors. Responsible and caring toward every crisis in the "old" center, Nikolay shows the same enthusiasm when working with visitors, volunteers, or employees that asked for his help. At the same time, he assists with the repair and the maintenance of the facility, as well as with the coordination of the volunteers’ work.

Yordanka Vazileva – Lesser Kestrel Breeding Program Assistant

Yordanka is a long-time volunteer of Green Balkans. For several years now, she has been a member of our team, responsible for the provision of Lesser Kestrel “own production”, for the project “Lesser Kestrel Recovery in Bulgaria”. Her efforts and year-round care for the Lesser Kestrel families have brought good results, and now a new generation of chicks flies freely in the wild. On the other hand, she also assists with the reception of visitors, feeds the patients of the Rescue Centre, and coordinates the breeding of other bird pairs at the facility.

Penyo Miley – Assistant of the Support and Service Unit of the Wildlife Rescue Center in the visitor, rehabilitation, and breeding sections

He is always ready to help. No matter what his duties are – feeding, cleaning, securing transportation of patients, receiving groups of visitors, or assuming just another task, Penyo is always dedicated to his work. Moreover, he also assists with the examinations of the wild patients and the maintenance of the facility as a whole.

Ivan Kaíchev – Project Coordinator – "People FOR Nature – Green Society in Action"

Like most of us, Ivan started as a volunteer at the Centre. Due to his good performance, serious attitude towards his duties, and ability when fulfilling his tasks, Ivan was invited to join our team. Besides his direct responsibilities within the project, he also assists with the work done at the intensive care unit, the vivarium, and the baby ward, as well as with transportation of patients and work with volunteers.

David Valchev – seasonal worker

As a volunteer at the Centre, he has been training birds to be presented to the audience. Like most of us, Ivan started as a volunteer at the Centre. Due to his good performance, serious attitude towards his duties, and ability when fulfilling his tasks, Ivan was invited to join our team. Besides his direct responsibilities within the project, he also assists with the work done at the intensive care unit, the vivarium, and the baby ward, as well as with transportation of patients and work with volunteers.

Yordanka Vazileva – Lesser Kestrel Breeding Program Assistant

As a student he was one of the most active volunteers of the Center. Therefore, last summer we invited him to become a member of our team. David’s work was mostly related to the old base – caring taking of patients, general maintenance and hygiene.

Yoanna Ivanova – seasonal worker

Although new, Yoanna was a member of our team in 2014. Hardworking and dedicated to the cause, she is always ready to help with feeding, cleaning, feeding, and caretaking of animals.

Reni Durakova – seasonal worker

As a volunteer at the Centre, he has been training birds to be presented to the audience. Like most of us, Ivan started as a volunteer at the Centre. Due to his good performance, serious attitude towards his duties, and ability when fulfilling his tasks, Ivan was invited to join our team. Besides his direct responsibilities within the project, he also assists with the work done at the intensive care unit, the vivarium, and the baby ward, as well as with transportation of patients and work with volunteers.
WILDLIFE REHABILITATION and BREEDING CENTRE – Annual Report 2014

ADMITTANCE
Calls and Signals
Every year the Wildlife Rescue Center receives signals of increasingly bigger number and diversity. In 2014 we received more than 6,000 signals. Besides those directly related to the activity of the Rescue Center, there were also signals related to all sorts of problems of wild and domestic animals in distress, logging, illegal construction, as well as inhumane treatment of pets. Although the latter does not fall within the competence of our team, we tried to be helpful and supportive, providing the people sending signals with information about the competent authorities they should contact.

Patients
In 2014, Green Balkans’ Wildlife Rescue Centre received a total of 1,410 patients, including 1,202 birds, 61 mammals, and 147 reptiles.

White Storks were the most numerous group of patients, followed by Hermann’s Tortoises - 125 individuals.

In 2014 our team made a tough decision – namely, admitting only protected species for rehabilitation. We had to take such a decision because of the increasing number of patients and the unchanged number of staff members. However, we provided logistic support to all signals related to unprotected animal species.

On the other hand, thanks to the adequate assistance of the people sending signals, RIEWs, and the system of the Regional Forest Boards, many juveniles, found fallen on the ground, were left with their parents, as the only intervention was putting them up on trees in the area where they were found. This method was introduced in our work a couple of years ago and proved to be particularly successful.

We also continued the already established practice to leave the babies of a great number of wild mammals – Roe Deer, Hares, and Squirrels, to be taken care of by their parents. And juvenile Swallows that had fallen off their nests were successfully placed in other nests.

In 2014 most of the patients arrived from the territory of RIEW Stara Zagora, followed by RIEW Plovdiv and RIEW Sofia. This is absolutely logical since these are areas where most of our Organization’s activities are implemented.

INSECTA – 1

We received patients by Class

AVES – 1200
MAMMALIA – 6
REPTILIA – 147
INSECTA – 1

We also continued the already established practice to leave the babies of a great number of wild mammals – Roe Deer, Hares, and Squirrels, to be taken care of by their parents. And juvenile Swallows that had fallen off their nests were successfully placed in other nests.

In 2014 most of the patients arrived from the territory of RIEW Stara Zagora, followed by RIEW Plovdiv and RIEW Sofia. This is absolutely logical since these are areas where most of our Organization’s activities are implemented.
Again, the most numerous group that sent patients to the Rescue Center was that of private persons followed by RIEWs and other state institutions.

The list of the animals transportation supporters could be found at WRBC website: www.greenbalkans-wrbc.org

In 2014, the peak intake of patients at the Centre was recorded in the summer months – June and July. Like in previous years, this peak coincided with the wildlife breeding season in Bulgaria. We recorded a continuous tendency – namely, increasing number of poaching cases in the active hunting season, and, unfortunately, shooting at endangered species, such as Imperial Eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Red-breasted Goose...

Conservation status 2013 and Conservation status 2014

Patients’ Condition and Reason for Admittance

In 2014, as it is clearly visible on the Chart, the main reason for admission of patients at the Rescue Centre remained unknown. Like in previous years, this was due to the fact that the patients of the Center were wild animals. Unfortunately, there were only a few cases where witnesses of the incidents could tell us what had caused the distress. Traditionally, the second most numerous group were chicks fallen from their nests. What was interesting in 2014 was the fact that the number of confiscated individuals, hatched chicks, and birds imported within reintroduction programs was almost the same.

Logically, because of the bigger number of wild chicks received at the Center, chicks hatched at the facility, or imported to be bred here, the most numerous patients were those in satisfactory condition. These were followed by exhausted individuals or individuals with fractures. The latter were those related to the rehabilitation part of our activities.
TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

Veterinary care

Most of the activity of the Rescue Center is the work done by the veterinary specialists. And if the work in the baby ward is in periods, the veterinarians work year round. In the past year, a total of 73 interventions were carried out, as the subsequent treatment of 35 of these cases was successful and the birds were released into the wild. An interesting fact here was the secondary healing with 25 of the fractures – dressing and/or external fixator, while in 10 other cases surgical approach was applied. In the past year we also introduced a combined method of osteosynthesis through an external fixator, which proved very useful for our feathered patients.

Foster parents

Our work was considerably facilitated by the method of placing chicks with foster parent families, some of them in the territory of the Centre. Therefore, we keep parental pairs of Common Kestrels, Barn Owls, Little Owls, and Lesser Kestrels. These handicapped and disabled birds save much of the work in the baby ward and, on the other hand, prevent the chicks from imprinting, which is inevitable in case of contact with people, no matter how careful we are. On the other hand, we continued placing juvenile Swallows and other songbirds in the nests of wild foster parents and dozens of babies were saved. Thus, in 2014, 28 chicks were left with parent pairs at the Rescue Center and 25 more Swallows were placed in foster parents’ nests.

RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE

The number of patients admitted in 2014 was almost the same as that recorded in 2013. It should be clearly noted here that more than 98% of all patients received in 2014 belonged to protected species.

It is interesting to note that in 2014 we achieved some of the highest results ever in terms of patients released into the wild – 46.6%. However, the total number of all released animals was significantly higher, considering many of the relocated patients, including all vultures and Lesser Kestrels involved in the reintroduction programs. Leaving the Rescue Center, these birds were relocated to adaptation aviaries, as envisaged in the methodology applied by our team. In 2014, again, we used the well-known, bird-friendly methods of release - adaptation aviaries and artificial nests, as only few of our patients were released “by hand”.

Patients by treatment outcome

- Released: 46.7%
- Transferred: 6.9%
- Transferred: 0.4%
- Lethal: 30.4%
- Euthanasia: 7.8%
- Aviary keeping: 2.3%
- Breeding program: 0.9%
- Wild orphans: 36.2%
- Foster parents: 21.3%
- Maintenance: 1.5%
- Prophylactic: 4.9%
- Medical: 12.3%
BREEDING PROGRAM

One of the most pleasant and attractive activities at the Center is the breeding program. The pairs involved in this program consist of handicapped and disabled birds, unfit to be released into the wild. Thus, in 2014, the Rescue Center harbored 118 feathered babies. Moreover, our pairs were entrusted with the responsibility of being foster parents, rearing wild chicks.

PROGRAMS FOR REINTRODUCTION OF EXTINCT SPECIES

Vultures’ Return to Bulgaria

As in previous years, in 2014 the Rescue Center was the quarantine lodge for the Griffon Vultures coming from Spain within the project for the recovery of the species in the Balkan Mountains. 57 vultures spent a total of 120 days at the facility, enjoying the wholehearted attention of our caring and dedicated team. On the other hand, 2014 was marked with an exceptional event – the first Griffon Vulture chick hatched at the Center. An event, our team waited for 14 years!

Saker Falcon Return to Bulgaria

The year 2014 was particularly successful for the Saker Falcons at the Center. Since the beginning of the program that started 4 years ago, this has been the most numerous offspring raised by the birds. Four of all 6 pairs were involved in the breeding program and hatched 16 chicks. The project team decided to tag 4 chicks with GPS transmitters, which were then released into the wild.

Within our Saker Falcon reintroduction activities, a representative of the team took part for a second time in the International Falconry Festival held in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Lesser Kestrel Recovery

In 2014, 11 pairs were formed out of 48 Lesser Kestrels bred at the Centre. The chicks hatched at the facility totaled 26, while 9 more were rescued in the colony in the adaptation aviary in the village of Levka and then raised by foster parents at the Center.
CAMPAIGNS
Education and Public Awareness Campaigns
In 2014, we realized a total of 9 large-scale campaigns and public events – presenting the Rescue Center’s Report 2013, mounting education and awareness raising signboards in 4 zoos in Bulgaria, and participating in green initiatives – bazaars, exhibitions, and organized release actions for birds treated at the Rescue Center.

Visits to the Rescue Center
Like in previous years, in 2014 the Center was visited by over 3,000 people aged 3 to 70, coming from more than 20 settlements in Bulgaria and abroad. They all got closely acquainted with the activities of the Centre, as many of them were certainly touched by the new, unexpected friendship with the Honey Buzzard called Osso, the Common Buzzard Misho, and the Owl Luly.

Donation Campaigns
In 2014, 34 adoptions and 10 individual donations supported the activities of the Rescue Centre. We hereby express our most sincere gratitude to our friends and supporters:

Training and exchange of experience
In 2014 we continued implementing our wildlife rehabilitation training activities and exchange of experience. In this regard, three students from the Veterinary Faculty of the Istanbul University had their practical training at the Rescue Center. In addition, 8 students and 33 schoolchildren visited the Rescue Centre within the project “Students and graduates’ practical training” of the Ministry of Education and Science, covering a total of 9,840 hours of work as interns at the facility.

At the same time representatives of the team visited a total of 12 Rescue Centres and zoos in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, in order to gain experience in their educational work.

FACILITIES, CONSTRUCTION, AND REPAIRS
When you have a base situated on more than 7 decoys, with dozens of facilities and a growing number of patients, pairs of birds involved in various programs and new species with specific requirements, you cannot avoid constant repairs and improvements. So, last year we built 6 new cages for Saker Falcons, finished and further equipped the aviary for Egyptian Vultures, laid the foundations for 3 cages in the visitor area, and reconstructed 10 old facilities meeting the needs and requirements of the species inhabiting them. In addition, we will only mention the daily maintenance and periodic improvement and enhancement of the environment of our cages, aviaries and facilities – more than 62 in total.
Volunteering

Volunteers are the most valuable resource for a non-governmental organization. These are the people on whose moral and physical support we rely. Since its establishment, the Rescue Center has been directly related to volunteering. In the past year we had the pleasure to work with a bit more than 30 volunteers, who contributed to our common cause with over 4,000 hours of voluntary work.


People for Nature – Green Society in Action

The project, implemented with the financial support of the Swiss Confederation through the “Reform Fund Linked to Civil Society Participation”, is focused on environmental education, promotion of environmentally friendly practices, work with competent authorities and recruitment of volunteers and supporters for the green cause. Within this project, we organized a series of training seminars involving volunteers, representatives of the RIW system, park directors, etc. We visited more than 6 festivals and green initiatives, welcomed more than 3000 kids to the Rescue Center, and delivered more than 10 presentations in schools and universities. The project implementation continues in 2015.

The Media about us

The media are among our main partners promoting nature conservation and the best practices of the Rescue Center. In 2014, more than 100 electronic, printed, local, and national media published information about the Rescue Center.

Funding

Incomes received at the Rescue Center in 2014 – 401,674.03 BGN

Costs incurred by the Rescue Center in 2014 – 403,836.75 BGN
Donors and Partners
We express our sincere gratitude to our partners:

- Enterprise for Management of Environment Protection Activities (EMEPA)
- Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW)
- Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water – Stara Zagora
- Trakia University – Stara Zagora
- Vocational High School of Veterinary Medicine – Stara Zagora
- Pet Hospital Dr. Tzekov
- INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSULTANTS Ltd. (UK)
- Praha Minicipality
- Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation
- Frankfurt Zoological Society (Germany)
- Abu Dhabi Environmental Agency
- Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)
- Contour Global
- LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Community (EU)
- Insurance JSC ARMEEC
- NATURA 2000 network
- Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research – BAS
- Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF)
- BULGARIAN-SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME
- Zoo Praha
- Toner Stream
- Praha Minicipality
- Zoo Praha
- Toner Stream
- Abu Dhabi Environmental Agency
- Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)
- Contour Global
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