Everyone remembers the previous year in a different way – some people measure success or failure, others count wins and losses or sorrow and happiness, planted trees or baked bread. As every hospital, the Wildlife Rescue Centre accounts for the year, counting the lives saved and those lost. This report is however going to show you other dimensions of our previous year – the number of visitors, sponsors, volunteers and the network of people who believe in the Centre and sent us wild animals in distress – our network of trust. Trust and hope are of key importance for each effort and care. Every year, regardless of being deeply involved with the everyday work of the Centre, I am eagerly waiting for its report. Because interesting information sometimes remains hidden in the everyday rush. I hope that browsing through these pages you would find something new and interesting for yourselves, you would like it and take it home. This is a report, based on the effort of 14 employees and 70 volunteers for 365 days of 2012. I «took» the story of the breeding programmes, as this is the only way for restoring the extinct species in Bulgaria we love and live in. Enjoy!

Toma Belev
Chairman of the Managing Board

The Team
Being part of the Rescue Centre is not just a job. Everyday life here is filled with challenges, there are both good and bad moments often with the need to work late. The people that make up the team of the Centre are closely associated with the green idea and are personally bound to its cause.

Dr. Ivan Ivanov – Veterinarian
Dr. Ivanov has been a veterinarian at the Wildlife Rescue Center for several years. The experience that is gained, coupled with his undoubted skills as a veterinarian make an integral and indispensable part of the rescue of injured wildlife.

Dr. Rusko Petrov – Veterinarian
Operational Manager of the Wildlife Rescue Center he is responsible for rendering assistance and providing patient care and resuscitation.

Ivaylo Klisurov – Manager
Ivaylo Klisurov has long been administrative manager of the Wildlife Rescue Center. And although no longer actively involved in the daily activities of the Centre, still deals with all difficult management decisions. Another part of his work is directly connected with the Center contacts with various government institutions, donors and other NGOs. With good administrative capacity Ivaylo Klisurov contributes to the development of the Green Balkans at local and national level.

Dr. Christina Klisurova – Public Relations Coordinator
Being also a qualified Veterinarian, in recent years Christina Klisurova has focused on the relationship of the Rescue Center with the rest of the world. All calls for distressed animals pass through the Center, and the documents that accompany them during their stay. She also coordinates the Center donations, public campaigns, and visitor area.

Venedelin Hristov – Associate in the baby room
Venedelin is a student of Veterinary Medicine at the Trakia University. In the summer he is a seasonal worker at the Centre. He has a great passion for baby mammals. Thanks to his care we are able to raise and release into the wild baby squirrels, rabbits and otters.

Pavлина Nikolaeva – Responsible for hygiene, disinfection and landscaping. Baby Room Assistant
Pavлина makes sure the Center is always clean and rooms tidy, with a beautiful flower garden that greets the visitors. During the busy summer season she is a dedicated assistant in the baby room. She is often involved in the transportation of patients and the work with volunteers.

Yordanka Vasileva – Baby Room Assistant and Associate for the Lesser Kestrels
Started in early summer at the Rescue Center as a seasonal worker in the baby’s room, her dedication and efforts did not remain unnoticed and now she is a contributor to the project for the reintroduction of the Lesser Kestrel in Bulgaria. She is an active assistant in the «old» center, engaged in feeding, caretaking and cleaning of animals, but also helps in transportation.

Karney Karneev – Responsible for the Breeding program and the training of birds
Karney is responsible for the breeding program and ensures the good conditions and care of birds of breeding programmes involved in the Center’s reintroduction programs. He is also assigned to the taming of birds with disabilities.

For more than 20 years the Wildlife Rescue Centre of Green Balkans has sheltered and treated injured wildlife. In 2012 we took in and treated 388 patients for whom the Center was the last hope for life. Some we could help others, unfortunately, we couldn’t. New members joined the team, and we parted with others. We had dozens of initiatives aimed at promoting not only our business, but also a «greener» idea. Dozens donated to our cause. Thousands visited us and supported us so much in social networks.

All this makes us think that the existence of the Rescue Center has become a social need and growing support is proof that we live in a developing society where nature and its resources are not simply given, but are of great value and a national treasure.

Penyo Milev – Associate Unit Support in the rescue center for wild animals visitors, rehabilitation and breeding area
His main duties are mostly related to the attendance of Rescue Center patients. This includes both the diet and hygiene of animals and their premises and the maintenance of the base as a whole. Actively participating in meeting groups of visitors at the Rescue Center and assisting veterinarians in examinations and other manipulations.

Ivanka Licheva – Veterinarian, Intensive Care Unit
She arrived at the Center in early summer to gain experience as a graduate student of veterinary medicine at the Trakia University. Now Ivanka has joined the Center as its main concern in the ER, and she helps in the maintenance of the database, documentation and transportation.

Lyubomila Krivoshieva – Taking charge of patients, Intensive Care, Baby Room, Release of patients and contributing to documentation upkeep
Lyubomila coordinates and takes care of injured animals received at the Center by ambulance in the ER or as babies to be released. At the same time, she collaborates in administrative work on the preparation of documents. Her photos captured important moments of the everyday life of the Centre.

Krasen Lazarov – Associate in the baby room
A qualified economist, his weakness is baby songbirds. Thanks to this dozens of small Swallows, Swifts and Tits were successfully reared and released.

Text: Christina Klisurova; Photos: Darren Weeke, Lyubomila Krivoshieva, Kalina Boytova, Ivaylo Klisurov, GREEN BALKANS;
Concept: Tanio Markov; Prepress: Lyubomir Andreiev; Printed by NEO Art – Stara Zagora
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Center calls and wild animals

Patients of the Wildlife Rescue Center begin with reception. Calls reach us in a variety of ways - fixed and mobile phones, email messages and lately, more often, in social networks. We have processed over 3500 calls. In addition to the calls related to wild animals in distress, an increasing number of people are turning to us in cases concerning domestic animals, signs of poaching, logging and more. Then the Center seeks to help citizens by consulting with the competent institution that should be allocated to adequately deal with calls or actions that can be taken on the spot.

Not every call ends with the patient’s admission. Recently, more and more people have been encouraged to contribute to the instant return of the animal in its natural environment, of course if there is no medical reason indicating necessary admission.

There were 3388 calls received at the Centre in 2012. The largest number of patients at the Center are birds. In 2012, 1282 calls were bird related, the largest number of which concerned White Storks – 157. There were 64 for Mammals – comprising Bats, Hedgehogs, Squirrels and Otters, and finally the Reptiles – Turtles, etc – 43.

One of the key elements in the work with rescued and distressed wildlife is in the process of entering the Rescue Center. Here we rely primarily on the support of our network of volunteers, who number more than 300 activists across the country and the people sending signals of wild animals in distress.

As can be seen from the graph, the number of individuals contributed to taking patients to the Center is the highest, namely 845. On p.4 are the names of all that contributed in 2012. Of course, in each case involving protected species, we refer to the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters (RIEW), in whose territory the animal was found. In practice, the activities of the Rescue Centre are directly linked to the successful cooperation with all 16 RIEW. Therefore RIEW rank second in the graph admitting patients with 179 cases. Third place was taken by cooperating NGOs, followed by zoos and veterinary clinics.

In 2012, the Rescue Center received patients from all over the country. Logically, the most numerous are those in the region of Stara Zagora and Plovdiv, where we operate two offices of Green Balkans.
Dynamics of acceptance of patients and conservation status

In spring and summer the number of incoming patients was significantly higher as the frequency of administration time was up to 25 animals per day, unlike autumn and winter, with only around 2 animals daily. Summer peaks coincide with the breeding season of animals in nature. There is also a winter peak period, fortunately around 2 animals daily. Summer peaks coincide with the hunting season. The largest number of patients are victims of poaching.

The intake of patients at the Rescue Center is increasing every year. This fact, according to our team, is mainly due to the growing popularity of our work in the media and the increased access to the Internet and mobile communications and the widespread use of social networks.

The majority of incoming patients are animals of high conservation value. Many of them are listed in Annex 3 of the Biodiversity Act, as well as a number of international conventions - Bern, CITES, Bonn and the Global Red List of IUCN.

Reasons for acceptance of patients

As in the case of wild animals, in many cases there are no direct witnesses to state the reason for the animal found. This indicates the large number of patients with unknown cause for accommodation – 629 cases.

The number of chicks fallen from their nests – 481, is a trend that the Center has set itself the task to reduce, by developing clear and concise directions for action for finding young animals.

Number of patients by cause of arrival

Very often, due to the acquired experience, our specialists establish the reason for the patient’s condition when they arrive for treatment at the Centre. This is possible, of course, with the help of modern diagnostic methods such as X-rays, clinical and paraclinical studies.

So, we identify cases of animals shot by poachers, hit by an electric shock, and others that have been poisoned. There is an alarming and growing trend in owning wild animals as pets. And frequent cases of high voltage electrocution, affecting mainly large birds such as Eagles, Owls, and Vultures, many of which are included in reintroduction and breeding programs.

List of private entities and institutions which have sent animals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institution</th>
<th>Number of patients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHOENIX Pet Hospital</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vesselina Stoykova</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Yaneva</td>
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<td>Velko Georgiev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valentin Vassilev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Velas Popov</td>
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<td>Borislav Popov</td>
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Summarized results of the activity of the Rescue Centre in the period 1992–2012
Veterinary Caretaking

Immediately after arriving at the Rescue Centre each patient, regardless of their condition, falls within the care of the host clinic. Patients are examined by veterinary experts to determine the clinical status, treatment and aftercare. All but a few are in a satisfactory condition, and remain for a period in the ER. Here, under the care of staff and volunteers, they receive the necessary treatment and specialized care.

In 2012 we performed 75 osteosynthesis and 157 minor orthopedic procedures involving immobilization of a limb, fixing of dislocations and other.

33 of the operated patients survived the resuscitation process, and 30 of them were released.

The most interesting cases are those of an owl and a buzzard with severe damage to the nervous system that were completely recovered.

Like previous years, the largest number of patients were received in satisfactory condition – 587. This is due to the large number of young in production entering the spring-summer period.

In 2012 we performed 75 osteosynthesis and 157 minor orthopedic procedures involving immobilization of a limb, fixing of dislocations and other.

33 of the operated patients survived the resuscitation process, and 30 of them were released.

The most interesting cases are those of an owl and a buzzard with severe damage to the nervous system that were completely recovered.

Results of the Activities of the Centre

In 2012, a total of 1388 patients came through the doors of the Rescue Center. Of these 32% were successfully released into the wild after their stay with us. Of the others – 6.1% were referred, while for 46.6% the outcome was fatal.

Work with infants

From early spring to late fall is the busiest time in the Centre. In 2012, 734 animals were accommodated in the baby room. The most numerous were young White Storks – 127 cases, followed by Kites – 51, and Black Swifts – 48.

A total of 320 of all young were successfully raised and released into the wild.

Naturally, the greatest pleasure of working at the Rescue Center is the moment of releasing the animals back into the wild. The Center team is always happy to share this moment with its followers, supporters and friends.

But in some cases we require the release process to proceed in a different way, mainly with friendly animals. That is why over the years, rather than the ‘release by hand’ we have increasingly begun to practice release through hacking facilities, adaptation aviaries and artificial nests. All these methods have a better chance of wildlife survival.

The selection of release sites is a very important step towards the survival of rehabilitated animals. With years of experience we have identified some suitable release sites, consistent with the requirements of natural species.
Breeding Program

It is an important part of the activities of the Rescue Center, once directed to breeding animals with disabilities, but now also for the return of species already extinct in the wild in Bulgaria.

So in 2012 we achieved success with the hatching of the first Saker Falcon in Bulgaria for decades.

Other species that successfully bred at the Center were: Eagle Owls, Levant Sparrowhawk, Barn Owls and Kestrels.

This year we continued to use the incubator room where we hatched and raised Saker Falcon.

Restocking of Griffon Vulture (Gyps fulvus) in the Balkan Mountains

The activities under this project funded by the LIFE+ instrument of the EU, continued in 2012. Within this project, a total of 52 vultures were accommodated at the Quarantine Centre in 2012, prior to their transportation to their new home – the adaptation aviaries in Stara Planina. The Center was one of the specialized assistance bird, and special studies were conducted on 14 other birds to establish the cause of death.

Reintroduction of Saker Falcon (Falco cherrug) in Bulgaria

Within this project, coordinated by the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research (IBER) at the Bulgarian Academy of Science (BAS), Rescue Center accommodated 12 Saker falcons imported from Slovakia. So now at the Center we have a total of 6 pairs of falcons, one of which hatched the first Saker in Bulgaria for decades.

The project objectives through a series of activities are to restore missing Saker Falcons in the wild in Bulgaria and one of the main areas is of growing ex-situ in captivity and breeding pairs of these birds in the center.

Reintroduction of Lesser Kestrel (Falco naumanni) in Bulgaria

This work was realized within the project «Conservation measures for target species under the Birds Directive of the EU – Lesser Kestrel, Black Vulture, and Imperial Eagle» funded by OP Environment and the subsequent project «Greater chance for Lesser Kestrel (Falco naumanni) in Bulgaria – Lesser Kestrel Recovery», financed by LIFE+ instrument of the EU. The project was set up with special breeding aviaries and formed new breeding pairs of Lesser Kestrels.

All released birds from the Wildlife Rescue Center are marked with standard rings from the Bulgarian Ornithological Centre, and some of them with tracking devices like satellite, radio or GPS/GSM transmitters. They all serve as feedback. For example, within the project «Conservation of rare and endangered birds in Bulgaria», financed by Mtel ECO Grant, 8 birds were tagged with GPS/GSM transmitters, since they are proven effective in the treatment and rehabilitation. The Long-legged Buzzard, lived 47 days, Lesser Spotted Eagle, according to data from the transmitter lived more than five months, and then migrated to Egypt, the second Lesser Spotted Eagle, lived more than two months, an Owl lived 23 days, and a second Owl, from which we received data for 24 days, settled in an area with no GPRS coverage. Some of the patients were found dead and in many cases the cause of death was man and his activities. Some were victims of the grid, others of vehicles like trains, cars, and the autopsy of a patient isolated high levels of pesticides in the body.

We continue to monitor the life of the third owl, released in early fall.

The track of KREA – the Lesser Spotted Eagle that migrated up to Egypt after being released from the Rescue Center.
Educational and Public Campaigns. Visits to the Centre

Increasing the role of the Rescue Center as a place for environmental education and promotion of the «green» idea.

Last year the number of participants in organized group visits participating in events within the Center was 1,890 people. In addition, many official guests and media partners crossed the threshold of the Centre.

During the year, a total of 8 campaigns were made larger with public appearances – Reports of the Rescue Center, opening the visitor area (combined with the celebration of the anniversary of the Rescue Centre), participation in fairs and exhibitions with organized releasing of birds.

On the other hand we enhanced our presence on the web – forums, social networks, blogs – as a quick and easy way to reach a wider public.

Donation campaigns

In 2012 we continued implementing some longstanding generosity, while realizing new ideas.

Thus continued the traditional adoption program of the Centre, which this year included 44 individual donors and corporate bodies.

Another traditional campaign – an initiative for Christmas «My Christmas, my little green step» was also implemented successfully.

At the beginning of the year we started the «Help a friend» geared to patients in the ER and the baby, which included 45 donors.

Here are the names of the people who supported us with their donations and to whom we express our sincere gratitude:


Fighting crimes against wildlife, confiscation, and cooperation with institutions and citizens

This year continued the case against the bonded captured on the Vidin ferry in 2009. A Bulgarian citizen, attempted the illegal export of two Bonelli’s eagle. After nearly four years the Vidin District Court issued a guilty verdict. Unfortunately, it was canceled by the Sofia Court of Appeal for Bonelli’s eagle. After nearly four years the Vidin citizen, attempted the illegal export of two

In 2012 continued the investigation of the case of Falco peregrinus calidus – subspecies of Peregrine Falcon, which is not found in Bulgaria, confiscated from the apartment of Stephen Gavrilov. At this point, investigators are still collecting evidence and legal expertise for the case. To Nada, that next year we will have a new conviction and a familiar face will all suffer.

In relation to international trade, the border checkpoint Kalotina stopped two attempts to export reptiles and amphibians undocumented. One of the cases relates to an exotic collection, containing 6 dragon lizards, 4 mice, 3 pythons, 15 chameleons, 49 turtles, 1 Scorpion, 6 Cancer and 10 snakes. They also found many worms and cockroaches. The animals were transferred without the knowledge and permission of the customs authorities. The case is being investigated.

In another case 16 poisonous snakes were found hidden in special tubes. The Reptiles belonged to an unprotected species Palestinian Viper.

In both cases, confiscated animals were not sent to the Wildlife Rescue Center.

From 20th to 25th August 2012, for the second time a representative of the team of «GREEN BALKANS» participated in the international meeting for the implementation of CITES and EU regulations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This year’s meeting took place at the global environment protection emblematic place – Kenya, Africa. The main objective of the meeting was to exchange experience with Kenyan environmental service (Kenya Wildlife Service – KWS), representatives of active NGOs working in the field of CITES, together with management and scientific authorities of CITES in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Ukraine. The second major focus of the conference was the conservation of the African elephant and the two rhinos (black and white) by regulating trade in ivory and rhino horn in the EU.

Beyond the issue of elephants and rhinos, the meeting widely covered other fundamental issues related to conservation of species by regulating trade therein, as well as issues related to the implementation of CITES, interpretation and transformation into national laws worldwide.

Voluntary Efforts

Since its establishment back in 1992 the Rescue Center has relied heavily on volunteer labour. Even today it remains one of the key drivers for our existence and development.

Activities such as cleaning, feeding, rearing in the baby ward, aid in recovery, maintenance of buildings and equipment are only few of the tasks implemented by our volunteers.

In 2012, 70 people aged 10 to 50 years have volunteered at the Rescue Center for a total of 1,464 astronomical hours.

At the same time, four students from the Vocational School of Veterinary Medicine «I.P.Pavlov» and one student from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Trakia University in Stara Zagora were doing internship at the Centre. A practice that will continue to develop in the future.

Here are the names of our most active helpers who we heartily thank for their dedication:

Media about us

Undoubtedly one of the biggest partners and helpers in promoting the work of the Rescue Center is the media. Thanks to them, our ideas reach all parts of the country and even beyond.

In 2012, the work of the Wildlife Rescue Center «Wildlife 300» was reflected in electronic, print and online media at national and regional level.

Funding

Last but not least the existence of the Rescue Center depends on the available funding. And in 2012 we were able to save thousands of animals in need, thanks to the annual allowance provided by the Ministry for Environmental Protection Fund, foundations and private donors. The total amount of money received was BGN 380,836.73.

Donors and Partners

We express our sincere gratitude to all who supported the development of Green Balkans’ Wildlife Rescue Centre, and most of all to:

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

Operational Program Environment 2007–2013, Priority Axis 3, (OPE)

Vocational High School of Veterinary Medicine – Stara Zagora

IBER

Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research – BAS

Pet Hospital Dr. Tzekov

Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF)

Raptor Breeding Facility (Wales, Great Britain)

Zlín ZOO (Czech Republic)

Toner Stream

Abu Dhabi Environmental Agency

Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation

Contour Global

DBU

Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Abu Dhabi Environmental Agency

Frankfurt Zoological Society (Germany)

Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research – BAS

LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Community (EU)

Mtel ECO Grant

Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation

Frankfurt Zoological Society (Germany)

Insurance JSC ARMEEC

Opportunities for better life