

LAZAROS

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The place where this story happened was not a world on the back of four elephants perched on the shell of a giant turtle floating in space, but its survival depends on the existence of wildlife representatives, too. And the direction is determined by man...

In a wonderful and magical area in Greece – Meteora, Egyptian vultures nest. Here the hero of the story – Lazaros, was preparing to raise his offspring. But the vulture got its name later. For now it is just an Egyptian vulture, which follows the whims of nature.

Until the day when...

POISON

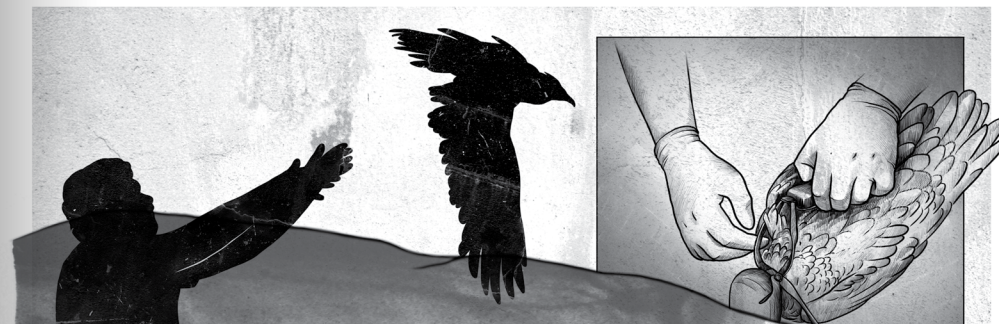
...changed everything.

In April 2012, the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Greece got alarming news – an Egyptian vulture was found in dire straits while the other bird of the pair had disappeared.

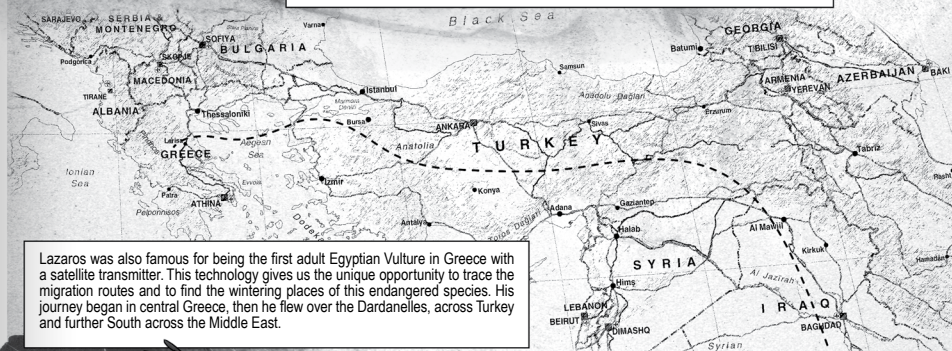
The vulture was saved thanks to a local livestock breeder, who found it and took it to a vet in Trikala. The bird was found next to a poisoned dog, in the same area where two foxes had also been found poisoned recently. The Egyptian Vulture was urgently transported to a rescue center. The cause of the tragedy was the illegal use of poisons. The other bird wasn't found.

MEDICAL CENTRE

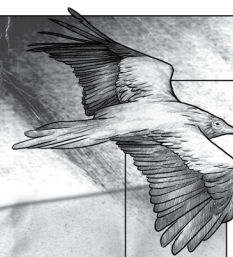
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But our hero's destiny took a lucky turn - the will to live proved stronger than the poison. As if God helped him - so it was named "Lazaros" ("God helps"). Two weeks later the bird had recovered and was set free in the Antichassia Mountains.



Lazaros was also famous for being the first adult Egyptian Vulture in Greece with a satellite transmitter. This technology gives us the unique opportunity to trace the migration routes and to find the wintering places of this endangered species. His journey began in central Greece, then he flew over the Dardanelles, across Turkey and further South across the Middle East.



On the 10 of September, 2012 he entered Africa and a few hours later crossed the River Nile. He faced the biggest challenge - Sahara. It took him just two days to fly over the burning sands and to enter Chad. During the journey to Central Africa, Lazaros flew more than 4 000 kilometers in just 14 days.

In the spring of 2013, a compelling force made Lazaros embark again on the long and dangerous journey back to the land where he had seen the worst and the best of people.

The migration road was almost coming to an end and so is our story. This end is named **"POISON"**. Lazaros was found once again poisoned in northern Greece. Only this time he didn't make it... He died in the last stretch of his incredible trip back home, just 200 km away from his final destination in Meteora, swallowing a poison bait illegally put to kill foxes or wolves. Lying next to him, our researchers found a second Egyptian vulture. The 2nd of April was a sad day for the project team, but also for Greek biodiversity and the world of conservation in general.

What to expect now?



BirdLife International and the Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF) sent a joint letter to the European and Greek Authorities about the poisoning of Lazaros. In that letter, these two organizations urge Greek authorities to take immediate actions to find the culprit, but also to include poison in their agenda as a top priority conservation issue, investing time and resources to create the institutional structure needed to effectively fight poison.

This fight is a priority for the LIFE + project "The return of the Neophron". Our goal and efforts are aimed at changing the direction of the world of the Egyptian Vulture - from destruction to life. This would inevitably affect the direction of our own world, too.

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